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SPIRITUALISM

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A POPULAR HISTORY FROM 1847

BY

JOSEPH McCABE

AUTHOR OF

"THE SOUL OF EUROPE," "GOETHE," "THE EVOLUTION OF MIND," ETC.

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PREFACE

Books about Spiritualism have been so numerous of late that the reader with little leisure probably finds it more difficult than ever to form an opinion. The only new work that can be of real use is a short and clear historical sketch of the entire movement. Those who make history, the living actors, rarely see its significance. The events of to-day take on swollen and gigantic forms, while the events of yesterday and the day before shrink into almost indistinguishable shapes on the dim horizon. It spoils one's perspective and sense of values. It obscures the real meaning of things. Life is a river rather than a procession. To understand it you must ascend the upper reaches, trace its tributaries, and glance at the hills and dales which directed the waters into the river-bed. Most useful of all would it be to rise high above the earth and survey the entire course, from the hill-sides on which the first showers fall to the point where the waters merge into the sea.

That is to take an historical view of a human development, and no other view is quite so instructive. Spiritualism lends itself to this kind of view, as it is little more than seventy years old. One can survey its entire course in a quite modest work without

omitting anything that is essential for understanding it. There is, moreover, no such work available; indeed, *histories* of Spiritualism are curiously rare in the vast literature of the subject. Apart from a few works, such as those of Capron and Mrs. Hardinge, which give an enthusiastic account of the quite early years of the movement, we have in English only the large and learned work of Mr. Podmore, which is rather a store of material than an historical sketch, and a very scanty and almost useless work by Mr. Hill. There is, moreover, no work in a foreign tongue that one might profitably translate for English readers. De Vesme only reaches the threshold of his subject; Lehmann and Kiesewetter are even less helpful than Podmore to the man who wants a bird's-eye view of the development of Spiritualism. That is what I seek to give—a simple evolutionary interpretation of one of the most remarkable movements of modern times.

J. M.

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SPIRITUALISM

CHAPTER I

THE PREPARATION OF THE WORLD

SPIRITUALISM began in the year 1848. Seeing that the Spiritualists of London invited the public, in 1920, to join with them in celebrating their seventy-second anniversary, the historian has no need to hesitate about choosing his starting-point. There is, further, no difficulty about selecting the precise event. The year 1848 was one of the great years of the nineteenth century. A grim revolutionary wave rolled over Europe. France finally rejected its old feudal royalty. Mazzini and his friends set up a republic at Rome. Germany and Austria seethed with rebellious sentiment. Chartists sent a shudder through London. The Abolition-movement gathered strength in America. It was a great year, a foundation-year. But the events to which Spiritualism traces its rise were as far removed as possible from these world-changing tumults. They were certain mysterious sounds that startled the inmates of a little wooden house in a very small village of a very provincial district of the United States.

There are reasons, which we will presently consider,

why some hesitate to admit that these obscure occurrences in the American village of Hydesville were the beginning of their movement. The late Professor Hyslop, for instance, one of the most distinguished of spiritualist writers, says, in regard to the practice of dating Spiritualism from 1848, that "there is little excuse for this narrowness of view."[1] Since it is the usual spiritualist practice, Professor Hyslop's words may seem strange. But the reader of his work will find that he, like other cultivated Spiritualists, regards the Hydesville performances as at least mainly fraudulent, and he is anxious to strip them of anything like a fundamental character. He thinks that "modern Spiritualism really originated in the work of Swedenborg." Other writers go much farther back along the dim ways of history. Some take us amongst the savage tribes, whose practices represent the life of man long before the dawn of history. Spiritualism is as old as man, they say; and they draw a distinction between ancient and modern Spiritualism. De Vesme began to write an exhaustive history of it, and in his two published volumes he has only just reached the events of 1848.

I do not propose to follow these writers through earlier ages or amongst savage peoples. The essence of what we now know as Spiritualism is, both in popular opinion and in its own official literature, the claim of communication with deceased human beings. At one time a Spiritualist was any man who believed

[1] *Contact with the Other World* (1919), p. 23.

in the existence of spirits. In that sense every Christian or Mohammedan is a Spiritualist. Those who still use the term in that sense would call such men as Sir A. C. Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge "Spiritists"; and on the Continent many accept that name. But the word Spiritualist is now generally used to indicate a member of an organised body or religion which is essentially characterised by communication with the dead.

In this, the correct sense, there was no Spiritualism before 1848. There were students of the occult, and they at times had many followers. There were religions in which a certain amount of communication with the dead was incidentally claimed. There were "seers" who professed to hold communication with spirits, and, like Swedenborg, some of them founded religions. There were rare and isolated cases in which individuals, resembling the modern mediums, professed to receive messages from the dead, or even to see them. But there never was, before 1848, a movement organised for that specific purpose; and in most of the cases which are usually given as "Spiritualism" in earlier times there was no profession of communication with the dead. Even Swedenborg rarely claimed to be in touch with dead human beings. Like most of the older "seers," he said that his revelations came from non-human spirits.

On the contrary, most Spiritualists claim, and more plausibly claim, that their movement not only began in 1848, but was peculiarly opportune about

that date. The nineteenth century was, they say, just entering upon a very dangerous period of "materialism," or absorption in this visible world and its concerns. There was the democratic movement to which I have referred. The masses of the workers were beginning at last to dream of a better earth and throw all their energy into the creation of it. There was the new scientific movement. In 1848, Charles Darwin was quietly working out his new theory. Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, and so many other apostles of this world were approaching their mighty tasks. On the other hand, the authority of the Churches was visibly failing. It was just the time for a new revelation. Philosophy and theology, the wings on which men had hitherto risen to higher spheres, were drooping. So, Spiritualists say, the living spirits of those who had "passed beyond" began to rap on the walls of our earthly home and prepare men for a direct revelation of the truth of immortality.

There can be no doubt that the decay of the older creeds had much to do with the rise of this modern movement, but the precise connection between the two, and with other movements of the time, requires more careful study. What happened in Hydesville in 1848 does not explain a movement which within a few years had hundreds of thousands of adherents. It is clearly the conditions of the *growth* of Spiritualism that we need to understand first.

There was a good deal of what is broadly called "occultism" in the world in the first half of the

nineteenth century. Many writers point out that, when an old national religion decays, a large number of what they call "superstitions" appear. We think of the analogy of some decaying forest, where, as the old trees die, the spirit of the earth is incarnated in a hundred weird parasitic growths. So it was, these writers say, in the old Roman Empire. So it was again in Europe when the powerful Rationalistic movement of the eighteenth century had greatly impaired the vitality of the old religion. It sounds plausible, but it is little more than a figure of speech. It is the decay of ecclesiastical *authority*, not of faith, which accounts mainly for the new developments. There were Spiritualists and occultists all through the Middle Ages; but they were promptly drowned as witches or burned as heretics. The fate of the few prevented the many from indulging this tendency, though it was always there. By the end of the eighteenth century the weapons had, in most countries, been torn from the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities, and the new freedom was exemplified in many curious ways.

Swedenborgianism was one of these new developments, and, as far as its small influence went, it helped to prepare the way for Spiritualism. But Swedenborgians were few and little noticed. They merely survived obscurely from decade to decade; the sudden and phenomenal development of Spiritualism about the middle of the nineteenth century is a totally different matter. It is absurd, from the historical point of view, to say more than that the

new belief found a few Swedenborgians ready to receive it.

The early and imperfect science of the eighteenth century was a much more important element. The magnetic force, which Volta and Galvani and others brought to the general notice of educated people in the eighteenth century, was peculiarly mysterious and fascinating. It was popularly regarded as a strange "fluid," stored in certain metals, capable of doing very extraordinary things. Presently it was supposed to be discovered that there was a magnetic fluid also in human beings and animals, and "animal magnetism" was discussed in every city of Europe where the ecclesiastical authorities were no longer strong enough to prevent such heresies. Certain individuals were believed to have specially large quantities of this magnetic or electric fluid, and in the first half of the nineteenth century groups of men and women formed everywhere those circles for the production of phenomena which have come to be called *séances*. A Dr. Mesmer, the chief apostle of animal magnetism, attracted an enormous amount of attention in France and Germany between 1770 and 1780. He could put patients into a magnetic sleep and discover their maladies. He could induce this magnetic sleep in certain specially endowed individuals (mostly women), and they developed remarkable powers of clairvoyance. This "mesmerising" went on in all the capitals of Europe, and was only interrupted by the French Revolution and the turbulent decades that followed. Others then

discovered that all of us have a share of this magnetic fluid, and that almost any group of us can make a table turn round (if it is not screwed to its pedestal) by placing our hands on it. A "table-turning" mania spread over Europe; and it was particularly virulent in England in 1847 and 1848, just before the arrival of the first spiritualist announcements from America.

How far this prepared the general public for a belief in occult powers will be seen from the following episode. In 1846, a little French peasant-girl, Angélique Cottin, began to attract the attention of her village by her remarkable experiences. When she rose from her chair, it was dashed backward to the ground. When she stood near a heavy table, it was overturned. As she was only thirteen years old, and a very quiet and ignorant little creature, this was a clear case of "occult powers." Her fame spread to Paris, and she was sent there, and actually survived examination by men of science there. Chairs and tables went over, furniture moved about, in full daylight, under the noses of these men of science. The theory was that she was extraordinarily charged with the "electric fluid"; and electricity was too little understood in those days for anybody to see the absurdity of supposing that, even if a person *were* heavily charged with electricity, it could overturn a table. Even the Paris Academy of Sciences could not discover how she did these things. She was known all over France for a year or two as "the electric girl." In the end it was found that she

had developed a remarkable power in the muscles of her legs, and could throw over a heavy table with them, under the eyes of a crowd of observers, without being detected, unless she was watched very closely.

As we read that a few years earlier, in 1839, two "electric girls" had been brought to France from Smyrna, we see how Angélique probably got the idea of her trick. Such things were common in the 'thirties and 'forties. "Mesmeric healers" were all over Europe. "Somnambules," or ladies mesmerised into a state of trance (like hypnotism), gave weird and wonderful performances nightly. In France and England, and most of Europe, this sort of thing was regarded as quite "scientific." But already there was a rival theory—a battle of Spiritualism and materialism. In Germany the idea of "spirit" was substituted for the electric fluid, and there were some everywhere who preferred this more refined theory.

It is well to remember, too, that in one form the spiritualist belief really was as old as humanity, and no ecclesiastical authority had ever ventured to condemn it. The Church could and did condemn the idea that certain individuals had what we now term mediumistic powers, and could "call spirits from the vasty deep." *Their* spirits were said to be evil spirits. They were wizards or witches. But the Church never condemned the popular belief that the ghosts of murdered people, or suicides, or other unfortunates, haunted the living. Men believed this probably a quarter of a million years ago, for we find

the belief in a most acute form amongst the lowest peoples of the earth. They believed it still in Europe and America in the middle of the nineteenth century. The ghost-story was one of the most popular forms of literature. The haunted house was as common as the public-house. This was not genuine Spiritualism, as no medium was required, and there was no systematic cultivation of this supposed connection with the other world. But the fact remains that until at least the middle of the nineteenth century the great majority of people believed that at any time spirits of the dead might rap on their doors at midnight, trail ghostly chains along the corridor, or make, in sepulchral tones, some terrible communication from another world.

All these more or less heretical forms of, or outgrowths from, the old belief grew steadily from the time of Voltaire to the middle of the nineteenth century. It may seem, at first sight, that this throws no light on the birth and extraordinary growth of Spiritualism in America, and many writers look almost exclusively to the peculiar conditions of American life. We have, however, to remember that the first feature of the American population of those days was that it was largely made up of adventurous men and eccentric refugees from Europe. As a rule, only the bolder would in those days brave the storms of the Atlantic in such small vessels as they had, and then advance out upon the mighty prairie to carve out their farms. The other most common type was the man who fled from persecution in

Europe. Whole sects, like the Rappites, migrated to the land of freedom; just as the Pilgrim Fathers had done, and as the Doukhobors would do at a later date.

There was thus a large and independent population in America prepared to deal boldly with new ideas. America was also at that time more sceptical than most countries of the old world: perhaps more sceptical than it is to-day. Many of the founders of the Republic—Paine, Franklin, Washington, Adams, Jefferson, etc.—had been Deists, and their close intercourse with the French during the Revolution had given them very advanced ideas. Benjamin Franklin had actually been a member of the commission which the French Government had directed the Faculty of Medicine and the Academy of Science to set up in 1782, to inquire into animal magnetism. He was quite familiar with the strange sights which were witnessed in Paris in those days: the rows of patients sitting round a tub containing bottles covered with water, the bent iron rods which went from the bottles to the diseased parts of the patients, and the convulsions and hysterical laughter and blood-spitting which the strain on the imagination—the "magnetic force"—produced. He knew the clairvoyants, and the somnambules, and the mesmeric healers who beguiled the hours of the French aristocracy during the years when the clouds of the Revolution were gathering, unnoticed, behind them.

Franklin was himself one of the founders of the science of electricity, and there was naturally as

much interest in these matters in America as in Europe. The Swedenborgians, Shakers, Rappites, etc., saw spiritual agency in all little-understood phenomena. The Churches were as yet imperfectly organised, and millions lay entirely beyond their influence and ready to entertain any religious novelty. Most of the population of twenty million people was distributed over the enormous area of the States, in small villages or towns which were very poorly controlled by the culture of the cities. Railways were only just beginning. The provincial papers were culturally low, parochial, and sensational. Life was very monotonous. Ideas of what was normal or abnormal were very primitive. Mesmeric healers, phrenologists, and all kinds of frauds and fanatics had good conditions for prospering.

Three instances may be given of the peculiarly favourable condition of the American atmosphere. Mrs. Emma Hardinge tells us in her history of the early movement,[1] that disturbances such as those which originated Spiritualism in Hydesville in 1848 had occurred among the Shakers as early as 1830. Mrs. Hardinge is very imaginative and unreliable, and the Shakers are so very much more imaginative and unreliable, that the historian must not offer this statement too seriously; but we cannot doubt that they gave her the information. They said that in 1830 their homes were disturbed by raps and the movement of furniture; their members were possessed by spirits and fell into trances. In

[1] *History of Modern American Spiritualism* (1870), p. 27.

the end they learned, they said, that in 1848 there would be a great discovery of material wealth—gold was discovered in California in that year—and a most generous outpour of spirit-communications. The modern reader will not take the prediction very seriously, as it was revealed by the Shakers only after 1848, but we must assume that the other part of the statement has some sort of foundation.

Mrs. Hardinge is more entitled to our confidence in regard to the next instance, because there are police-court records to confirm the sequel of it.[1] A Dr. Larkin, of Wrentham (Mass.), took up mesmeric healing in 1837. Part of this practice was, as I said, to throw sensitive women into a supposed state of trance (or "mesmerise" them), and Dr. Larkin found an excellent subject in a servant-girl named Mary Jane. It is one of those cases of abnormal psychology which we cannot linger here to analyse. The important point is that the girl, in the state of trance, announced herself to be under the control of the spirits of dead humans. The chief control was the spirit of a dead sailor, and the language which issued from the lips of Mary Jane was so very nautical, and unlike her usual speech, that the shuddering hearers were convinced. Loud raps on the furniture and the floor were heard. Chairs and tables moved mysteriously about. When the "spirits" went on in 1846 to put the girl's limbs repeatedly out of joint, the devilry was too much for pious neighbours. In the autumn of 1847, they appointed a committee to

[1] *History of Modern American Spiritualism* (1870), pp. 157–62.

investigate the case. The committee reported that it was a genuine case of spirit-control, and in 1849 the clergy moved. Mary Jane was brought before a magistrate, and was sentenced to sixty days in prison; which effectively persuaded the spirits to leave her.

The dates sufficiently show that this was quite independent of the Hydesville phenomena, and the case of Andrew Jackson Davis is similarly earlier and independent. Davis, whose real trade was shoe-making, became in 1843 a mesmeric healer and clairvoyant. He was then a precocious, uncanny, long-haired youth of seventeen: the kind of person who was easily believed to be rich in animal magnetism. In 1844 he declared that Swedenborg and Galen had appeared to him in a trance, and warned him that he had a great mission to mankind. This is, of course, a genuine case of Spiritualism, since he professed to be a medium communicating with the spirits of the dead; but it is very doubtful if Davis could have initiated such a movement as the Fox family eventually did.

The extraordinary effusions he now poured out convinced many that he was really spirit-controlled, and two admirers, Dr. Lyon and the Rev. W. Fishbough, took him to New York to inaugurate the new revelation. The three of them lived for a year on Davis's mesmeric healing, and in the intervals he went into a trance and reeled off, in a most remarkable fashion, a new philosophy of the universe. It was taken down as he spoke, and appeared under the

title of *The Principles of Nature* (1847). There is no need to examine the book seriously. The scientific errors and crudities of it release any person from considering whether there was any element of revelation in it. It is enough to recall that he traced the line of evolution from the clam to the tadpole, and from the tadpole to the quadruped! Moreover, Davis was a palpable cheat. He maintained that up to that date he had read only one book in his life, and that book was a novel. We know from his admirers that this was not true, and any person can recognise in his pages a very crude and badly digested mess of early scientific literature. He plainly read much on the sly. I should say that he was very gifted, and with training might have become a notable writer. There are very few youths of twenty-one who could have put together his crude mass of material in the rhetorical and pseudo-philosophical manner which he sustained day after day for several months. A professor at New York University—a Swedenborgian, be it said—pronounced his book "a profound and elaborate discussion of the philosophy of the universe." It was assuredly neither profound nor accurate, but it was a remarkable performance for such a youth.

Davis and his followers were presently swallowed up in the spiritualist movement, but they did no slight work in preparing the way for it. The new Spiritualism, which originated in Hydesville, did not reach New York until the end of 1849. Davis preceded it by two years. One can imagine the

joy of the New York press on discovering that a revelation from the spirit-world was being delivered in the very heart of the city! It was an excellent "stunt," as the modern American reporter would say, and the book, when it was published, was very widely discussed. Numbers who were dissatisfied with the Churches, yet were not prepared to discard religion, embraced the new message. It had about it a pronounced flavour of science, especially evolutionary science, and it promised a way out of the growing conflict of science and religion. It absorbed the sentiments of early socialism, which was very common in America, especially since the work done there by Robert Owen (1824–8). It dealt very freely with old dogmas which the Churches still refused to modify. The number of Davisites grew considerably, and before the end of 1847 they founded a paper, *The Univercœlum*.

In one respect the theological controversy had proceeded farther in America than in the old world, and a kind of new Christianity had appeared which gave many recruits to Davis. Large numbers resented the doctrine of eternal punishment and the idea that salvation was confined to any particular sect or religion. They organised under the name of Universalists, and they had churches and ministers in all the large towns. Davis found many supporters amongst these Universalist ministers, as we shall presently find Spiritualism doing. There was no dogmatic authority to control them, and the social and scientific teaching of the new message seemed to

them to forecast a really final and satisfactory form of religion.

In fine, we must notice a feature of the very first importance, which is too rarely noticed by historians; indeed, I know of no writer on Spiritualism who has realised how large a share it had. Cardinal Newman has in one of his works a dissertation on the reasons why Christianity superseded Paganism. One of the chief reasons was, he says, because it offered to a sceptical world a very clear and confident message about a future life. The ancient Greeks and Romans were almost as vague and indifferent about the future life as the Babylonians. There is, in fact, only one of the older civilisations—that of Egypt—in which men concerned themselves materially about their life after death, or tried to frame a clear conception of it. Newman is wrong in supposing that this troubled the Romans, or that the very definite Christian idea of heaven was one of the chief reasons of its success.

But the argument illustrates one of the great advantages of Spiritualism over the Christian Churches, and it is far sounder in this connection. The genuine Christian doctrine of heaven, the theological doctrine, was never in the minds of the uneducated millions of Europe. They really believed in a material heaven: in winged and radiant angels, in the glorified forms of their dead, if not in streets of gold and houses of topaz. The spread of education and criticism in the nineteenth century had a curious effect here. It purified the popular conception of heaven; it restored

its spiritual features; and to thousands of believers it made heaven less appealing, if not actually insipid. A mother's heart was troubled when she learned that she would "meet" (if such a phrase was permissible at all) her child again only as a disembodied spirit. A man felt only moderate consolation in the doctrine that he would come into mental relation with his dead young wife, but would never again see the lovely face, the beaming eyes, the graceful form that had enchained his affections.

Upon this puzzled generation, shaken alike in its conception of heaven and its grounds for belief, A. J. Davis and Spiritualism broke with their restoration of the mediaeval idea. It was "Summerland," Davis said; from him Sir A. C. Doyle has borrowed the term. It was earth without pain, disease, or death. The bereaved mother would see her child's dear form and blue eyes again. The new heaven was not only certain, for it now rested on no inferences and no ecclesiastical authority, but it was also intelligible and attractive. It had neither the insipidities of Dante's *Paradiso* nor the horrors of the Christian hell. Universalists found it just what they desired. Men and women who were on the point of quitting Christianity because of the more painful features of its mediaeval theology discovered a religion to which they could subscribe.

By these various developments, scientific and social and religious, the American public was in great part prepared for the new gospel. Other reasons for its remarkable growth will appear as our story proceeds.

More human interests will be enlisted. But the movement was to pass through a few years of rather haphazard and precarious evolution before it would place this definite picture of the future life before the world, and we must now examine those strange events of the year 1848 from which the river plainly takes its rise.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST RAPS

Hydesville was a very small village in the extreme north of New York State. It was not far from Lake Ontario, and not very far from Niagara. From New York it was two hundred and fifty miles distant—a two-days' journey at the time—and the nearest town of any size, Rochester, was thirty miles away. Hydesville was, in fact, merely an irregular cluster of a few dozen wooden houses, lying on the outskirts of the larger village of Arcadia. The people were, of course, farmers and purveyors to farmers. The winter was a long stretch of small talk over blazing fires, while the land without lay in the grip of the terrible northern winter. The summer and autumn—there is scarcely a spring—were crowded with agricultural and domestic work. It was a world in which the birth of kittens mattered, and the flight of a crow was an omen.

Here, in the winter of 1847–8, lived a quiet Methodist farmer, John D. Fox, with his family. In the house with Mr. and Mrs. Fox were Margaretta, or Maggie, aged fifteen, and Catherine, or Katie, three years younger. A married sister, Leah Fish, a most important person in the history of Spiritualism,

lived at Rochester: a very shrewd young American matron, apparently a widow, making her living by teaching music. A son, David, lived two miles away. The parents and the two younger girls had moved into the house in December 1847. We are told that the previous tenant had found it more or less haunted, but we need not notice this. It was in February 1848 that the trouble began. Mysterious raps sounded on the floors and furniture of whatever room the two little girls were in. When they lay abed, the most appalling and uncanny rapping was heard.

John D. scoffed at it all. Mrs. Fox grew more and more nervous. Least concerned of all were Margaretta and Katie. "Here, Mr. Splitfoot, do as I do," the little girl of twelve would say; and the mysterious power would promptly give the same number of raps as she had done. It did not occur to the flustered mother that there was something uncanny about this calmness of the two children, *if* they believed that the devil or a ghost haunted their bedroom every night. Mrs. Hardinge says that the mother's hair turned white in a week. The two merry and handsome little girls found it a joke. It was singular behaviour for the two august mortals who were chosen out of the whole race as the first vehicles of the projected invasion of earth from the spirit-world.

The way in which the mysterious something reproduced precisely what it was asked to do showed Mrs. Fox that it was an intelligent being: not a rat or an

insect, as her husband contemptuously said. She, or somebody, decided to ask it questions. The answers were to be "Yes" or "No," expressed by a certain number of raps. The familiar ghost-story would suggest the catechism. Was it the soul of a murdered man? Had he been killed and buried in that house? To all these questions the answer was affirmative; but the careful reader of Mrs. Fish's later account of these things will hesitate to follow her when she says that her mother elicited the fact that it was the soul of a pedlar who had been murdered there and buried in the cellar. How many professions did she name to the ghost before she came to "pedlar"? In fact, the alleged murderer, who was named, afterwards turned up in Hydesville (as Mrs. Hardinge says) and threw, not cold, but very hot water on the story. We shall see presently that Maggie Fox in later life described the story told to the public by her sister as a tissue of deliberate untruths.

The sounds were genuine enough, though the story that any bones were found—except those of a dead horse in the creek, as Katie disdainfully said—rests only on the word of Mrs. Fish. On March 31, Mrs. Fox called the whole village to come and hear. It is a naïve picture. Some seventy or eighty people crowded into the one-storey cottage, listening with delicious shudders to the answers of the murdered pedlar, while the two children lay innocently in the bed. The ghost startled them by giving, in reply to questions, the age of each of the people present,

the number of their children, and so on. There was no doubt about the visitation. The Fox family abandoned the haunted house—needless to say, it then ceased to be haunted—and scattered. Margaretta went to live with her married sister at Rochester. Katie was sent to live with relatives at Auburn. The ghosts, who were now numerous, followed the girls. The mediumistic power was strangely conveyed to their relatives and friends. Rochester and Auburn soon had quite a number of houses in which ghostly fingers rapped out answers to questions. Visitors to Rochester and Auburn took away the contagion to their own towns. Within a few months the epidemic had spread over the State of New York, and was approaching the metropolitan city. Spiritualism was founded.

Mrs. Fish, the eldest sister, gives us a moving account of the way in which her family tried to evade or get rid of their awful power. Her mother's hair turned white in a week. She and Margaretta after a time were told by the spirits that they must give public sittings, and charge for admission, so that a larger audience might hear the truth. They shrank from the ordeal, and there came a night, in November (1848), when the spirits gave them an ultimatum. Unless they promised within twenty minutes to begin work in public, the spirits would leave the earth and postpone the great revelation until a later generation. The small circle of sitters frantically appealed to the Fox sisters, but they were adamant. There were "showers of tears and choking sobs."

The last rap was rapped; the spirits sadly departed. For two weeks the little group of faithful in Rochester lived under a cloud. Then there came to Rochester from Auburn a Mr. E. W. Capron, at whose house Katie was staying, and who also had developed or discovered the mysterious gift. He became one of the leading apostles of the early movement, and its chief historian. Whatever words of persuasion he used, they were effective. Leah (Mrs. Fish) and Margaretta opened a public hall in Rochester, and became professional mediums. Mr. Capron went back to Auburn, and that town also was soon busy with professional mediums.

The town of Rochester was rent in twain. Do you, or do you not believe it, was a question that dwarfed every political issue and all interest in the harvest. Committees were appointed with American facility, and came to no conclusion. Leah Fish (who about this time married her lodger, Mr. Brown) bore her younger sisters triumphantly through the ordeal. The professors of Buffalo University, not far away, challenged her. They held that the sounds were produced, as it is possible to do, by the girls cracking their knee-joints. Leah boldly accepted the challenge. It was really with the joints of their *toes* that the sisters produced the noises, and Leah felt that they were safe. In point of fact, the professors so placed or bound their legs that they could not use their toes, and there were no "raps."

In spite of this crucial experiment, the movement spread like a fire on a prairie in autumn. The august

shade of Benjamin Franklin came along. He explained that he was at the head of a college of spirits which was charged to help mortals and restore their faith. These learned spirits laid down, before the end of 1849, the best conditions for the production of phenomena. Darkness was, they (through Mrs. Fish) said, the first condition; and the deeper the darkness, the more varied and intense the phenomena. Music and singing and cheerful talk were useful at the beginning of a sitting. Too concentrated an attention to the medium was not desirable. Once these conditions were generally understood, mediums arose in every town of New York State, and there was a spirited rivalry in the production of new manifestations.

Mrs. Hardinge admits that before the end of 1849 there was "chaos." On account of the healthy rivalry between various groups she has no hesitation in telling the truth about some of them. There were, she says, "the wildest scenes of confusion." Not only did infuriated Irish Catholics occasionally break in and chase the Spiritualists from room to room, but the scene in the circle itself was often painful. "Two or three of 'the prophets' would be jabbering in unknown tongues at once, while others would be shouting the war-whoop of the Red Indian. Apostolic letters, in miserable grammar and worse spelling, were palmed off as genuine productions of the seventh sphere."[1] There was trouble, especially at Auburn. Mrs. Tamlin, a mesmeric healer there, discovered

[1] *History of Modern American Spiritualism*, p. 52.

soon after the coming of Katie Fox that she was gifted with the same and even greater powers. She was quite ignorant of music (Capron says), yet when, in a state of trance, she took up a harp, the music was such that "any attempt to describe its beauty must fail." Apparently Leah Fish (who was a professional music teacher) had inaugurated this development. Through her the spirits dictated hymns and music for the sittings; and the hymns suggest an American provincial teacher at a dollar a lesson rather than the "seventh sphere." But a rival circle arose at Auburn, and there was grave trouble. "The Auburn Apostolic Circle" was visited only by the very highest and most select spirits, such as Moses, Paul, Daniel, and John; though their messages were, Mrs. Hardinge says, in badly spelled rustic American. Two Universalist clergymen joined them. A hundred of the circle moved out from wicked Auburn to form an ideal community at Mountain Cove. One regrets to have to record that this wonderfully favoured group broke up in unsavoury scandals and quarrels.

The Foxes remained the leading mediums, and the ambition of all circles which could afford it was to have the mother (who seems to have been early reconciled to her white hairs) and three daughters together. The Rev. C. Hammond describes a sitting with them in the first month of 1850. The tables were lifted. The chairs and sitters were pushed about. The drawers of a bureau far away from the mediums were opened and shut. The curtains were rustled. Cold,

ghostly hands stroked the cheeks and felt the hair of the sitters. In fact, Mr. Hammond distinctly saw, though the condition of darkness was scrupulously observed, an eerie, transparent hand pass before him. In other words, within a year of the commencement of public sittings the Foxes were doing almost everything that even Eusapia Palladino could do in the twentieth century.

More important people than these Universalist clergymen endorsed the movement. The most powerful and respected journalist of New York at that time was Horace Greeley, owner and editor of the *Tribune*. A socialist and humanitarian, Greeley was from the first well disposed to the new movement. As early as December 1848 he published long and not antagonistic accounts of the "Rochester rappings." Dr. Hallock, a fairly well known New York medical man, consulted a mesmerised clairvoyant on the business. The raps were quite genuine, he was assured; a great revelation was dawning upon the human race. Swedenborg himself gave this information to the medium. She described him in some detail and with general accuracy. And there could be no doubt about the genuineness of this apparition, because, when they asked the medium in her *normal* condition whether she knew anything about Swedenborg, she said, "with unmistakable sincerity": "No —does he live in New York?" So Dr. Hallock and a few more went over; which greatly impressed New York.

In the spring of 1850 they invited the four Foxes

to New York for a serious investigation. Men of such distinction as W. C. Bryant, one of America's leading poets, J. Fennimore Cooper, the novelist, General Lyman, Mr. Bigelow, and George Bancroft attended a private *séance*, and all professed to be deeply impressed. Horace Greeley now wrote, with unmistakable sympathy, and very grave attention was given to the movement. The Foxes, in fact, lived at Greeley's house. Already, in 1850, they must have outgrown their first crudeness and been prepared to meet highly educated inquirers. Before long, in 1851, New York was astonished to hear that one of its chief judges had accepted Spiritualism.

Judge Edmonds, of the New York Supreme Court, a distinguished lawyer in the very prime of life, was completely won by the Foxes. The serious student will not think it immaterial to know that Edmonds had for some time been in a state of great depression on account of the loss of his Christian belief. He was one of those rare characters, in his class, who clung emotionally to religion, yet were intellectually repelled by the doctrines of the prevailing creed, and he was therefore well disposed toward a new formulation of the belief in immortality. This despondency was in 1851 deepened by a painful bereavement, and we may assume that he approached the phenomena with no inconsiderable "will to believe." His conversion was little less than a triumph, and his zeal was extraordinary. In 1853 he, jointly with Dr. Dexter, issued a work, *Spiritualism*, which gave his solemn profession of faith to the whole of America.

The accession of Judge Edmonds was not merely of very great importance to the movement, but will puzzle the modern reader. We shall see that Edmonds's friend, Governor Tallmadge (former Governor of Wisconsin), another grave and distinguished lawyer, soon afterwards announced his adhesion. Other lawyers and judges joined them. The conversion of an aged man of science like Professor Hare, which we will discuss presently, might be explained away without difficulty; the endorsement of the phenomena by a dozen judges and well-known lawyers could not so easily be set aside. They were, for the most part, men in the prime of life, and men who had spent twenty or thirty years in the detection of untruthfulness and the study of character. Surely, there must have been in the movement something more serious than the phenomena which are usually described in histories of the period?

One may remind the English reader that legal distinction, and much other distinction, in America did not necessarily imply conspicuous merit and ability. The political system was by 1850 exceedingly corrupt. Since 1840, Washington had been surrendered to political corruption; and Tammany had captured and dominated New York since the beginning of the century. Every office might be bought. The corruption of the lawyers and judges was an essential part of the system. Hence it must not at once be assumed that, because a man in America occupied a distinguished position, he possessed such ability as might be fairly presumed in the case of a man in a

similar position in England. Any one of the dozen undercurrents of American life may have carried him to office.

Judge Edmonds seems, as far as one can ascertain—he was not a man of such importance that there is ample biographical material from which to reconstruct his character—to have been a capable lawyer of high character. But he was predisposed to admit Spiritualism, and the contents of his book and the reports of his spiritualist friends show him in anything but a judicial attitude. We have a full account of one of the sittings of the "New York Circle" which completed his conversion. It was held, in May 1851, in the house of a wealthy convert named Partridge. Nearly a dozen mediums were included in the circle of twenty. Mrs. Fox and her three daughters were there; and other mediums were Gordon, Fowler, and Cooley, of whom we shall see more in the next chapter. After a mild production of the ordinary phenomena, someone proposed—a very common way of securing complete darkness—that the lights should be extinguished in order that a chance might be given for "spirit lights." A pandemonium followed. The furniture was turned upside down, the bells rang, the house shook with raps. Partridge himself describes the grave Judge Edmonds as beside himself, or "in the possession of the spirits." His voice was heard calling excitedly: "I'm touched—now I am tapped on the shoulder—now they are at my feet." In the end Edmonds and the mediums, who seem to have been having the time of their lives,

were "dragged" into a smaller room, and the door was shut. There, for two or three hours, there was an incredible performance, including the singing, in chorus, of "Auld Lang Syne." This astonishing evening completed the conversion of Judge Edmonds.

In 1853, Edmonds was delighted to discover that he was himself a medium. His performances are not beyond the reach of illusion, and we need not examine them. His daughter Laura then became a medium, and it is quite impossible to understand the history of Spiritualism properly unless one boldly considers such phenomena as she exhibited. There is not the least room here for illusion, hallucination, or coincidence. Either the most extreme claim of Spiritualism is true, or the cultivated daughter of a Judge of the Supreme Court of New York resorted to the grossest trickery in order to deceive her father in a matter which he regarded as sacred. It is a quite plain issue, as far as the daughter is concerned; though we may suppose that the father has been subject to some hallucinatory exaggeration in describing the matter. He gives us the most explicit evidence of his daughter speaking languages with which—as far as his knowledge and her express assurance went—she was totally unacquainted. She conversed for an hour in Greek with a Greek, he says. She talked Polish with Poles. She gave him communications in Spanish (which he knew) from dead Spaniards. She spoke also, ostensibly in a state of trance, in Latin, Portuguese, Hungarian, and several Indian tongues. We may, as I said, assume that

Judge Edmonds, who was in a very exalted condition, has innocently exaggerated the *amount* of her communications in foreign tongues, but it would be strange if anybody supposed that he and his friends merely imagined these things happening in his house for a year or two; nor has any writer ever suggested this. One has to face a clear dilemma. Laura's cousin, another educated girl of good family, and believed to be of good character, did the same things. Governor Tallmadge's thirteen-year-old daughter did things just as remarkable. Her father says that she did not know a line of music, yet under the control of the spirit of Beethoven she performed marvellously on the piano. Again we may allow for hallucinatory exaggeration on the part of the father, but something remains. Either these young ladies got up their lessons in secret, and deliberately deceived their fathers and friends, or the claim of Spiritualism is true.

When a writer avoids these delicate points, and merely talks vaguely about the conditions of American life, he is quite unable to explain or to understand the growth of Spiritualism. By the year 1850 it was no longer a mere question of uneducated people receiving supposed messages from their dead relatives. Men of some distinction in the large towns at least spoke respectfully of it, and many people of education embraced it. There is some evidence that Lincoln himself, a shrewd lawyer if ever there was one, and Lloyd Garrison, were for a time drawn to believe in it. We shall meet the names of others, and it

will be understood that, as the Spiritualists now had a press and widely advertised every word of commendation, large numbers of people became interested.

It is so material to understand this that I will further anticipate the chronological order and give another instance. In the spring of 1850, the press reported a new and sensational series of phenomena. At Stratford, in the State of Connecticut, a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Dr. Phelps, found his house thrown into complete disorder by "spirits." The windows were broken. The furniture was pulled about, and missiles were thrown from and in every direction. Brickbats came (it was said) tumbling out of mirrors. Turnips, with strange hieroglyphics carved on them, grew out of the dining-room carpet under the eyes of the family. Letters fell from the ceiling. An umbrella was seized and thrown to a distance of twenty-five feet. One member of the family, going up to an empty bedroom, found in it "eleven figures of angelic beauty." In the centre of them was a dwarf, "most grotesquely arrayed"; but the pure origin of the phenomenon was guaranteed, because before each angelic figure was an open Bible, and the angelic finger pointed to some passage in favour of Spiritualism.

All this was guaranteed by a well-known clergyman, and the spiritualist press published corroborative letters from neighbours. Andrew Jackson Davis was summoned, and, with the help of the spirits, he read the hieroglyphics on the turnips. The house was haunted by the spirit of a Frenchman who was

condemned to a very deep place in hell. Less gifted people than Davis remarked that it was singular that Dr. Phelps had not recognised the writing of his own son, though there was no attempt at disguise. One man, who was permitted to see the figures of angelic beauty, disdainfully calls them dolls. When the boy's pants were torn off him, and when he was tied to a tree by the wicked spirit, people were mystified. There is probably no doubt in any person's mind to-day that this clergyman's son had deliberately and seriously perpetrated the whole of the phenomena, not one of which was beyond his power. Independent reports enable us to check the extravagances of the accounts in the spiritualist papers. What really happened was that, as in the previous cases, a boy of good family deliberately deceived his own parents and others.

The early literature is full of these things. Sons and daughters of the most respected Spiritualists did things which place before us a quite plain alternative: spirit-agency, or fraud by unpaid and highly respectable people. From children of ten to men of middle age the contagion spread. We shall see numberless instances of this, apart from paid mediums, as we proceed. Naturally many found it impossible to suppose that the accomplished daughter of Judge Edmonds and her cousin, the daughter of the Rev. Laroy Sunderland, or the son of Dr. Phelps, could deliberately cheat on so grave a matter. They preferred to believe that there really was a "great outpouring" of spirit upon America, a new era in

which the light of the spirit-world was at last flooding through the windows of the material universe. So Professor Hare and Professor Mapes, Judge Edmonds and Chief Justice Williams, Governor Tallmadge and General Bullard concluded. So Horace Greeley, and W. C. Bryant, and Fennimore Cooper, and others were disposed to believe.

The Foxes were the principal agents in these conversions, and Leah Fish (or Brown), the eldest daughter, was the organiser and most strenuous propagandist. It will be as well to anticipate a much later date, and put the reader in a position to understand this remarkable family. We have seen that Professor Hyslop writes very dubiously about them in his *Contact with the Other World*. He sees "no reason to question" Mrs. Fish's story (p. 27), yet in the same paragraph he refers to "the confession of Margaret Fox," with evident acceptance of it. The confession of Margaret Fox was that the movement was a fraud from beginning to end, organised by her sister, Mrs. Fish. Mr. Hill, also, is very ambiguous about the Foxes. He says that "there is a certain amount of testimony to alleged confessions on the part of the mediums, afterwards recanted or denied."[1] There is, not a certain amount of evidence, but not the slightest doubt on anybody's part, that Margaretta Fox confessed, and never recanted her confession; there is merely "a certain amount of evidence" that Katie Fox recanted the similar confession which she made.

[1] *Spiritualism* (1918), p. 41.

The first serious blow which this early American Spiritualism experienced was in 1851. The *Tribune* for April 17 of that year published a sworn affidavit from a Mrs. Culver, a relative of the Foxes. Katie Fox had, she said, confessed to her that they produced the noises by cracking the joints of their toes. They were able to give many intelligent, and some accurate, replies to sitters who inquired about dead relatives, because they watched the faces of the sitters very carefully and felt their way. This was a decided check, because experiment showed that it was possible; but Mrs. Culver made one or two slight and immaterial mistakes in detail, and Spiritualists persuaded themselves that these invalidated the entire statement.

It was not until the spring of 1888 that the serious confession took place. Margaretta Fox became engaged, while she was still quite young, to the well-known arctic explorer, Captain Kane. He is sometimes quoted as a Spiritualist. On the contrary, he regarded the whole movement as fraudulent, Margaretta tells us, and took her from it for a few years and sent her to college. He married her, and during the following decades she wavered between his pressure and her craving for the prestige of a great medium. After his death she returned entirely to it. But in the 'eighties there was a furious quarrel between the three sisters. The details are not clear, but it seems that Margaretta and Katie drank, and Leah, who was now a determined old lady of over sixty years, feared they would talk, and put heavy pressure on

them. She had Katie's children taken from her. There was, at all events, a most bitter feud, and Mrs. Kane (Margaretta) gave an interview to a reporter of the *New York Herald*.

The fearful confession appeared in the *Herald* on September 24, 1888. There is no need to look up the ancient files of the New York press, as all that was published was collected, with much supplementary matter, in a work by R. B. Davenport.[1] This book was written under the guidance of Margaretta and Katie, and it contains a facsimile letter from them authorising Mr. Davenport to publish the documents and facts. How Mr. Hill, one of the most scrupulous of spiritualist writers, could say that there was merely "a certain amount of testimony to alleged confessions," one cannot understand.

Mrs. Kane repeated what Mrs. Culver had said. Katie and she had discovered, when they were very young, that they could produce sharp noises by cracking their toe-joints. Ample experience has since shown that even older people can do it, but young children are suppler, and, if they have their feet against a board when they lie in bed, they easily develop the power. They had at Hydesville hoaxed their elders out of fun. Leah had then come from Rochester, and had forced them to confess to her how they did it She had taken Margaretta with her to Rochester, had developed the power herself, and had forced her younger sisters to join her in deceiving

[1] *The Death-Blow to Spiritualism* (1888). There is a copy in the British Museum.

the public. Later they developed the musical and other manifestations, made ghosts out of luminous paper, and so on. It was all "absolute fraud" from 1848 to 1888. Mrs. Kane had felt her position so acutely that she had tried all she could to get a real belief in spirits. She had even lingered in cemeteries at night. She had never obtained the slightest evidence.

The confession made a sensation in the United States, especially as there had lately been some heavy exposures of mediums. Leah, or Mrs. Underhill —she was now married for the third time—retorted that it was a vindictive fiction, and Spiritualists generally followed her. But in October of the same year, Katie, who was now married to a London lawyer named Jencken, returned from England, and made a similar confession.[1] It was "all humbuggery, every bit of it," she said. There was, she said, not a single genuine spirit-manifestation from 1848 to 1888. Mrs. Kane then actually took the New York Academy of Music, and gave a demonstration on the stage of the way in which they produced the raps. Mrs. Jencken sat in a box, and supported her.

Mrs. Kane never recanted this confession. Mrs. Jencken did. Only in the previous year her two sons had been taken from her through the Society for the Prosecution of Cruelty to Children. She had disproved the charges, and had recovered her boys; but Davenport says that the Spiritualists now threatened to deprive her again of her children, and she

[1] *New York Herald*, October 10, 1888, and Davenport's book.

submitted to their pressure. However that may be, the confessions remain. Many of the more cultivated Spiritualists admit them, and are very far from joining in a celebration of the year 1848. Those who are disposed to reject them have to choose between two painful alternatives: either they are true, and two of the women best acquainted with English and American Spiritualism declared it "a fraud from beginning to end," or else the two mediums who were specially chosen for the new revelation, and had been engaged in spiritual intercourse for forty years, uttered, because of a family feud, the most terrible blasphemy against all they held sacred. It is simpler to say airily, as Mr. Hill does, that there is "a certain amount of evidence." But it is untrue. The fact of the confessions is undisputed.

CHAPTER III

THE SPREAD OF THE MOVEMENT

It is impossible to bring anything like order into what Mrs. Hardinge calls the "chaos" of the next few years. There was no definite progress in any particular direction. In December 1848 the Foxes had taken a public hall at Rochester, and entered upon their spirited three-months' campaign for recognition. "Sweet Auburn" developed simultaneously. In the course of 1849 the piquant narrative of the fight over the "Rochester rappings" spread from journal to journal in the United States, and people began to experiment in many towns. Before the end of 1849 the Foxes were travelling from town to town. Comparatively small "circles" were found to be much better than large audiences in halls, and they could be held more or less in private, and concealed from the orthodox (especially the Catholics), who were apt to break in. By 1850 the movement was thinly spread from Canada to New York, and westward as far as St. Louis.

The incorporation in the new religion of Swedenborgians and Universalists was, as I said, not so important numerically as is sometimes represented, but it was important from the point of view of pro-

paganda and organisation. It gave the movement a small body of trained speakers and organisers, and rhetorical addresses were found to be quite as important as raps. Of twenty apostles of the early movement I find that no less than ten were clergymen, generally of the Universalist Church. There was the Rev. W. Fishbough, who, as we saw, had at once accepted A. J. Davis's revelation. The Rev. Laroy Sunderland was a more popular, more rhetorical, preacher—a well-known revivalist. He had taken to mesmerism, and from that he had easily gone on to Spiritualism. The Rev. Jesse Babcock Ferguson, a well-known Presbyterian minister, evolved in the same way. The Rev. Adin Ballou was another clergyman, a Universalist, who became a very prominent Spiritualist. The Rev. S. B. Brittan, of New York, an eloquent Universalist preacher, had adhered to A. J. Davis, and was editor of his *Univercœlum*. He abandoned it in 1849, when it ceased to exist, its star paling as the sun rose, and a few years later he established a spiritualist journal, *The Shekinah*.

Judge Edmonds and other important persons joined these experienced speakers in their rhetorical appeal to the public. At the same time the aid of journalism was invoked. *The Spirit Messenger* appeared in the summer of 1849. Brittan's *Shekinah*, which was greatly esteemed, ran for eighteen months in 1852 and 1853. In the latter year the chief and longest-lived organ of the early American Spiritualists, *The Spiritual Telegraph*, was established. At New York a wealthy merchant named Partridge was

converted in 1850. We saw that Judge Edmonds was finally converted at his house in that year.

Partridge's wealth was another most important gain to the movement. Those who imagine it struggling in poverty and obloquy for several years are very far astray. One dollar per person was the usual charge for a sitting—say, from two to four or five pounds per sitting—and popular mediums like the Foxes could give several sittings a day in New York without exhausting the demand. Then there were wealthy people like Partridge, and comfortable and very generous people like Edmonds and Tallmadge and Hare. Partridge found the funds for *The Spiritual Telegraph*, and he was politely invited to be joint-editor with the Rev. S. B. Brittan. By the summer of 1851 there were six spiritualist organs in the United States, and the phenomena reported from all sides were so extraordinary that the press in general was quite ready to give them ample space, even in derision.

It is from these journals that Mr. Capron and Mrs. Hardinge (or Hardinge-Britten—she preferred to be known by her maiden name, Emma Hardinge) compiled their early histories of the movement. They reflect a quite bewildering confusion of the wildest claims and the most fantastic eruptions. It would, perhaps, be merely misleading to attempt to trace a steady development in the midst of this strange medley of fact and fancy, and the reader will best understand the actual human evolution if a few instances are given from each of the next few years.

We have already seen that as early as 1850 the Foxes had gone far beyond rappings. Rival and original mediums arose on every side, and it was impossible to remain within the narrow circle of the first manifestations. Spiritualists said that the spirits were gradually finding new ways in which they might catch the imagination of and communicate with mortals. Capron gives a good illustration for the year 1850. There was a sitting at Rochester with the four Foxes and other professional mediums. Benjamin Franklin had announced that he and his spirit-band would give a new and decisive demonstration. They would telegraph a message from one room to another. The party divided, half going into each room, and, sure enough, the message received in the second room proved to be exactly identical with the message delivered in the first room. This was found to be very convincing, and it was copied by other mediums in many places. The telegraph had, of course, recently been invented, and one cannot say whether the mediums had secretly rigged up a wire. Capron tells us that there were mysterious preliminary noises, and, when a sitter asked what this meant, Benjamin Franklin (or the medium) replied that they were " trying the battery." But it seems more likely, from the description, that the messages were prearranged. In all these cases there were professional mediums in each room.

Other phenomena were developed by the professional mediums in the course of 1850. It was now a common thing for the table, round which people sat

to receive messages, to be tilted. It began to rise into the air. Presently it rose into the air with people sitting on it. Governor Tallmadge tells us triumphantly that a table on which he was invited to sit rose into the air. How on earth, even a lawyer like Tallmadge might ask, could a lady-medium be supposed to achieve this? There was in those early days of simple faith little disposition to look for confederates.

The modern reader is very apt to pride himself on his superior mental alertness, but a patient examination of some of the cases recorded will, if the reader really tries to put himself back into the atmosphere of the time, enable him to understand. Here is an experience recorded very fully, and joyfully, by Mrs. Hardinge.[1] At Waterford, a small village something like Hydesville, there lived in the year 1850 a Mr. Anson Attwood. As in all such cases, we hear nothing whatever suggested against the character of the owner of the "haunted house." These outbreaks nearly always occur in the homes of people who enjoy local respect. Attwood's ten-year-old daughter—surely a guileless person—became a medium. Raps were the least important of the phenomena that occurred. The furniture was moved or tossed about with considerable force. The strange events made so deep an impression on the district that the clergy decided to have a destructive investigation.

One of the most esteemed men in the neighbouring

[1] *History of American Spiritualism*, pp. 77–9.

town of Troy was General Bullard, a lawyer. We must, as I previously explained, not pay much attention to such titles as "General" in the America of those days, but Bullard was, at all events, the chief lawyer of Troy. He set out at the head of a committee to settle the infant-prodigy of Waterford. The members of the committee were inclined to be frivolous when they arrived. The mysterious little lady sat in a high chair, playing with her toys and eating candy. The report says that she placidly continued to munch sweets while the most terrific phenomena occurred all round her. The heavy table "rolled like a ship at sea." The child and chair were taken up and carried about "with the ease of a feather blown by the winds." The investigators themselves and their chairs were moved about the room. This poetic description is, of course, from Mrs. Hardinge, and, as usual, she does not describe the degree of light or darkness, or tell us whether there were more muscular members of the Attwood family present. General Bullard, however, was stupefied. As a final test he said to himself, *mentally* (if we may trust the historian): "If this be indeed the spirit of my brother [as the raps had announced] let him move that child in her chair towards me." We are told that "before he could conclude the sentence in his own mind, the child, chair and all, was lifted, carried, or moved, none present could define how, completely round the table, and set lightly down by the side of General Bullard." The critical reader will carefully note that no one present could see whether the chair was "lifted,

carried, or moved." It was evidently very dark. But the General started up from his seat, exclaiming: "By heaven, it is all true!" Spiritualism had another lawyer-recruit; and many who had "long groped in the blindness of cold materialism beheld the glorious sunlight of immortality proved."

Apart from the poetry of Mrs. Hardinge—which I trust the reader appreciates, in spite of its mixed metaphors, as much as I do in quoting—the fact remains that the chief lawyer and other select persons of the town of Troy were converted, and endorsed the marvellous spirit-manifestations in connection with a child of ten, sitting in a high chair chewing sweets. The news spread over the county. The spirit-power broke out in all directions. Two miles away a respectable young lady went into a trance which lasted forty-five days. She awoke a powerful medium. The spirit of a religious revival, of the apostolic days of a religion, spread over whole districts. "The opening of the gates" was chanted with deep and genuine fervour. They believed that God had made a new change in the economy of this planet.

Such things were happening all over America between 1850 and 1855. Here is a case from Boston. Leah Fish had, as I said, introduced spirit-music in 1849, and it was very popular. It was a more spiritual manifestation. Musical instruments of every variety were called into requisition. The cynical observer would, no doubt, note that the accordion, the tambourine, and the hand-bell, which are not very difficult to learn, were the instruments most

commonly adopted. Where the medium was a little more refined, but not very expert, the guitar was favoured. The piano lent itself to all kinds of manifestations. A Buffalo girl got "magnificent symphonies" by simply laying her hand lightly on the piano-case. Dozens of cases are quoted in which the piano was turned with its face to the wall. One lady got so far as to rest her piano on eggs without breaking them; or she got this seriously reported.

This is, however, to anticipate a little. Let us return to Boston, and to quite respectable society in Boston. A Miss Catherine Mettler, aged sixteen, was a pupil for the piano, and she played only in the rudimentary way in which young ladies of that age usually torture the neighbours. One day, as she sat at the instrument, she felt a strange force seize her hands and impel her to play. She did a "marvellous improvisation." The spirits of the great dead musicians—Mozart, Weber, Beethoven, etc.—from that hour habitually controlled her. Musical Spiritualists reported that they showed "unmistakable individuality." They played their own masterpieces, and occasionally they gave entirely new and "sublime compositions." Mrs. Hardinge does not attempt to explain why these "sublime" new pieces have been lost to music. However, the Rev. S. B. Brittan gravely and triumphantly described all this in his paper, and the good news spread. The young lady's mother became a powerful and prosperous medium.

Spirit-writing began in the same early period to rival the clumsier method of obtaining messages by

raps. It was well known in 1850, and in 1851 the most extraordinary manifestations were given. The most notable instance was that of Fowler, because here again we are confronted with the plain dilemma: very gross fraud on the part of a well-educated and unpaid person, or absolute proof of the truth of Spiritualism.

Fowler was a medical student who became interested in Spiritualism in 1851. After a time he reported that he had experiences which go beyond those which any medium has ever claimed, before or since. Ghostly men entered his bedroom at night, produced their own writing material, and wrote messages which they left in his room. As he showed the messages in the morning, there could be no doubt about it; unless his friends chose to think that this student of mature years could lie. The writing was in a strange character, and the professor of Hebrew at New York University reported it to be Hebrew. This man, Professor Bush, was a Swedenborgian, and he seems to have taken an optimistic view of the writing; but he by no means pronounced it to be "pure Hebrew," as Mrs. Hardinge says.[1] Bush made certain reserves, and a more independent professor bluntly declared that whoever wrote the passage (which was a sentence from the Bible) was so ignorant of Hebrew that he did not know that it is written from right to left. The reader will easily see that this is a decisive test, which Fowler could not

[1] Podmore has a careful study of the matter in his *Modern Spiritualism*, i, p. 239.

foresee. If a sentence is taken out of a book in some Western language, it may be copied perfectly, although the writer knows nothing about the language. But if an ignorant person copies a sentence from an oriental book, and does not know that the print reads from right to left, he may make a ludicrous mistake.

It was not a critical period, and Fowler's story was widely received. Leading Spiritualists took him up, and asked him to get a more impressive message. They gave him a piece of parchment, and Fowler laid it in his room and went to bed. He produced it the next day with a short message and the signatures of no less than fifty-six well known spirits! Mrs. Hardinge gives us a facsimile reproduction of it.[1] Benjamin Franklin was there, of course, and most of his distinguished colleagues of the War of Independence days were with him. Their signatures were well known and recognisable; and it does not seem to have occurred to any that they were on that account easily learned and imitated by Fowler, or that (as any careful student will see) there is a common element in all the different signatures on the parchment. We may, however, suppose that a modern Spiritualist would not claim that this audacious performance was genuine. It has never been repeated, and it does not in the least fit any theory of mediumistic work. But Fowler became a most popular medium. We saw that he was one of the men who finally converted Judge Edmonds in Partridge's darkened dining-room.

This new development of manifestations expanded

[1] *History of American Spiritualism*, p. 564.

with the usual force and rapidity. By 1852 there was no less than 2,000 writing mediums in the United States. Benjamin Franklin was very busy, but distinguished authors and philosophers of former times selected their instruments everywhere. Thomas Paine communicated his discovery that the philosophy he had taught in life was quite wrong; scarcely anybody seems to have known that Thomas Paine, a Deist (not Atheist), believed in immortality as much as they did. Sir Isaac Newton and Galileo gave some remarkable scientific ideas. Byron, Milton, and even Shakespeare, took possession of lisping maidens or hard-headed farmers, and gave new treasures to the world. Dante dictated a poem, in strong provincial American, of three thousand lines. Whole treatises were dictated. America was flooded with such appalling compositions that even Mrs. Hardinge, who was not very fastidious, was moved to irony.

If these things were done in the green wood, the cities, it will be conjectured that very marvellous things were done in the dry. The case of Jonathan Koons may be taken by way of illustration. Koons was a farmer at Dover Village, a scattered cluster of houses in one of the wildest districts of Ohio. His house was two or three miles away from that of his nearest neighbour. The type may be imagined from stories of American rural life at that period. Jonathan became a sceptic, and in 1852 he began to investigate these rumours about a new revelation of which he read. It was a very common development. In the course of 1852 Jonathan's friends learned that he was

a medium, and all his nine children, from the seven-month-old baby to the eldest, a youth of eighteen, proved to be mediums.

Koons built a log-house on his grounds for experimental purposes. At first he merely locked it, and kept the key in his pocket ; and he found, he said, that reams of spirit-messages were deposited in the locked room. This also is one of those marvels which no modern Spiritualist would attempt to fit into any theory of spirit-action, as there was no medium, so we need not linger to examine it. In one of these communications Farmer Jonathan was directed to make what he called a "spirit-machine." It was a crude structure of zinc and copper for localising and collecting the "magnetic aura." Then musical instruments were introduced : two drums, a harp, a guitar, a violin, an accordion, a tambourine, a triangle, a tin trumpet, and several bells. He was further ordered to place on the table a weak solution of phosphorus, so that the spirits might dip their hands in it and manifest themselves in the dark room. When these preparations were completed, and the entire Koons family assembled in the isolated log-house at night, the din was unholy. Even revolvers were brought in and fired by ghostly hands in the dark. Neighbours came from all parts to listen to the pandemonium. As the good news spread, people came from quite long distances, even from New York. Koons took no fees. Indeed, he generously housed and fed the visitors from a distance. The reader may construct his own psychology of the matter.

In the written messages it was explained that a special band of very ancient spirits had chosen this rich centre for manifestations. They had lived on earth before Adam, and their leaders were so very important that Koons was encouraged to address them as "King." Incidentally, I may notice that this is probably the real source of the "Katie King" who later interested Sir W. Crookes, and the "John King" who controlled Eusapia Palladino. The "Kings"—it was at first a title, not a surname—were prodigiously powerful and popular. They sang choruses for the sitters; a distinguished American Spiritualist, who had heard them, assures us that the singing was "a foretaste of heaven on earth." They made "exquisite music" with all the instruments at once. They caused the house to "rock like a boat." They shook hands with sitters, and, after dipping in the phosphorus, manifested their hands to unbelievers. They gave written messages in great numbers; though the philosophy contained in them was rather what one would expect from an isolated Ohio farmer, and the style had a curious resemblance to that of the letters of Jonathan Koons (several of which Mrs. Hardinge reproduces).

Throughout 1852 and 1853 these things enthralled the spiritualist world. All the leading Spiritualists visited Dover Village and guaranteed the good faith of Jonathan Koons and his handy sons and daughters. One visitor was permitted, clarivoyantly, to see "King No. 1," a being of "gigantic proportions" and "transcendent beauty." A neighbouring farmer was stim-

ulated to try his powers. He and his wife and ten children were not less successful than the Koons family. Jonathan and his sons soon set up as travelling mediums, but they are said to have been comparatively powerless without the wonderful magnetic aura of Dover City, and they soon fell into obscurity. Theirs is one of the queerest cases of abnormal psychology in the whole early history of the movement.

In any case, the attention they had won sent a spiritualist ripple all over the State of Ohio, and westward towards the Pacific. "Spirit-houses" were set up in many places. Children in the streets began to play at being mediums. In the spiritualist press it was reported that in case after case the play ended in earnest. A wealthy ex-Congressman named Cathcart, a "scientific man" (apparently he dabbled in chemistry), saw his children playing the game one day, and joined them. In fun he called upon the spirits to send Balaam's ass, and the response was so real that he was converted at once. His seven-year-old boy became a medium, and was tossed up to the ceiling and put upon the highest perches in the room by invisible hands. A Mr. Leo Miller was running a lecture-campaign against Spiritualism. He was overpowered by spirits and converted on the platform. An Ohio tailor named Rogers got the afflatus. He was, as usual, totally unacquainted with the art of drawing, yet he suddenly began to paint "most exquisite" and "inimitably faithful" portraits of dead people whom he had never seen, but whose relatives recognised the pictures.

"King" and his band had taken possession of Ohio, but nearly every State in the Union now had its hundreds of mediums, and the *Spiritual Telegraph* reported the marvels weekly. America was bewildered. Nothing was too extraordinary to assert or, for hundreds of thousands of people, too extraordinary to be believed. From Buffalo came a story that during a sitting the spirit had given a shrill blast on a drover's whistle. Mediums were not searched in those days. It was enough for the sitters that there was certainly no such instrument in the room or in the house. The spirit explained that it had borrowed the whistle from the pocket of a drover in a tavern three miles away, and would now restore it. Sure enough, they found on inquiry that there was at the spot a drover with a whistle in his pocket. No one turned detective and tried to ascertain if the medium knew the drover.

From cultured Boston came a story which must have greatly attracted other mediums. An elderly lady of means was interested in the movement. We may fairly assume that she was generous to it, and was expected to be more generous when she died. The spirits "apported" a pure white dove to mark their appreciation of her conduct. This was the beginning, in the early 'fifties, of "apports." To the inexpert it may be explained that it means the bringing into a closed room by the spirits of some object from a distance. The old lady was delighted with the present from spirit-land. In the orthodox theory it may, of course, merely have been apported by spirits from

the nearest wood; but it was of such "singular gentleness and beauty" and so "intelligent beyond description" that the lady seems to have regarded it as a real visitor from "Summerland." It is recorded that various elderly ladies afterwards received similar gifts. The terms of their wills are not stated.

I am here merely trying to restore the American atmosphere during the period 1850–1853. It is essential for the reader to understand that vast numbers of people got the idea that there was a Pentecostal outpouring of gifts. There was an epidemic of religious emotion. Critics do not sometimes realise that these people all believed in the reality of spiritual power, and thought it capable of doing almost anything. To borrow a drover's whistle, blow it, and instantaneously put it back three miles away; to play a piano with the case closed or a popular air on Koons's violin; to forecast a death or read the secrets of a heart—these were supposed to be elementary performances for a spirit. It was now decided, they believed, that the long aloofness of the spirits from our mortal world should come to an end. Manifestations of every description might be expected anywhere. The majority were not only incapable of imposing scientific tests, but they had not the mind to impose any. Science was, in fact, not yet born. We shall soon see how one or two scientific men took up the matter, and—they were converted!

It was a wonderful world, the like of which, perhaps,

will never again be seen. At all events, many will regard it as the last great outburst of emotional religion before the triumph of modern science. The cold suggestions of reason were unheeded, or the crudest checks were regarded as crucial precautions. Naturally, fraud throve in such an atmosphere. Exposures began in 1852. In 1853 a New York cabinet-maker declared that he had been engaged to make tables with hollow legs for mediums. Wires passed through the legs to the next room, or the room underneath, for the production of raps without contact. In another place a crowd broke the table and tore up the floor, and they found wires of this description. We will, however, follow the development a little farther before we consider this aspect.

CHAPTER IV

THE HIGH-WATER MARK

It is neither possible nor desirable to reproduce here more than a small fraction of the extraordinary reports which circulated in America in the early 'fifties of the nineteenth century. Ten spiritualist journals were in the field by 1854, and they vied with each other in obtaining sensational copy. Those who would read more of these fantastic reports may consult Mrs. Hardinge's history, which is a large compilation from the spiritualist press of the 'fifties. But the reader must be careful not to conclude, because I skip from New York to Dover Village, from Ohio to Buffalo, that the movement had merely a little centre here and there amidst a vast hostile or indifferent population.

Spiritualism has had in one respect a quite different evolution from other religions. It has not grown steadily onward from its humble beginning. Its high-water mark was reached within five years of its rise. Then, as we shall see in the next chapter, there was a very considerable ebb. It rose again in the 'seventies, especially in other countries than America, and ebbed once more in the 'eighties. Toward the close of the nineteenth century it made

new progress, but, as all will remember, it was still a relatively small and obscure movement when the Great War broke out. The tragic conditions of the war will seem to many to have raised it to a greater height than ever, and some of the new converts to Spiritualism apparently imagine that it is now for the first time about to become a world-religion. This is entirely wrong. It has never again reached the high-water mark of 1854 or 1855, and does not seem likely ever to do so. The war engendered emotional conditions which are not without analogy to the conditions in the United States in the 'fifties of the last century, but were far less in intensity. We shall see later that before the war there were probably about 200,000 Spiritualists in the world. This number may have been doubled during the period (1919–1920) when the war-conditions reached their maximum of influence. A sanguine person might claim that it was trebled. Even this, however, would leave the movement very far short of what it was in America in the 'fifties.

The extraordinary growth may be realised from a discussion at a Roman Catholic Congress in America in 1854. One of the speakers estimated that 11,000,000 Americans, out of a total population of about 25,000,000, had embraced the new religion! The figure is ludicrous, but it shows that the movement must have been extraordinarily successful. Spiritualists themselves generally estimated the number at between one and two millions. Partridge, in 1854, said "over a million"; Tallmadge said "two millions";

a neutral or hostile writer in the *North American Review*, said "nearly two millions." Religious sects always take too optimistic a view of their own numbers. In 1910 the American Spiritualists returned their number as 400,000, but the census of that year showed that they numbered only 150,000. We may conjecture that in the 'fifties the American Spiritualists numbered between half and three quarters of a million, in a population of about 25,000,000. They probably do not number half a million in the entire world to-day. The movement has never since approached the high figure it won within five years of its foundation, though the population of each country is more than doubled.

An incident in 1854 warns us to take these figures of millions of adherents very cautiously. Governor Tallmadge organised a petition to Congress, asking that the Government should make an official inquiry into the truth of their claims. One has to understand the conditions of American political life before we can understand this remarkable request, but I am concerned here only with the number of the petitioners. There were only 15,000 signatures. Tallmadge induced a friend, General Shields, to introduce it to Congress. Shields either dealt rather scurvily with his friend, or he became timid at the last moment. He himself killed the petition by the humorous and disdainful remarks in his introductory speech. It was laughingly laid on the table of Congress.

If we accept the figures given in the spiritualist press and histories, there were then 40,000 Spiritualists

and a hundred mediums in New York alone. It seems impossible that, if this were the case, they should have allowed a petition to go to Congress with only 15,000 signatures, but we may suppose that there was some difference of opinion as to the advisability of the petition. What is clear, is that Spiritualism was now strong and fairly organised in New York. We have seen that they enjoyed the prestige of such names as those of Judge Edmonds, ex-Governor Tallmadge, and General Bullard. In 1854 they formed a "Society for the Diffusion of Spiritual Knowledge," and the list of names in its announcements was not without weight. Tallmadge was President; and amongst the Vice-Presidents we find Chief Justice J. Williams of Iowa, Judge Fowler of Kentucky, Judge Spaulding of Ohio, Judge Larrabee of Wisconsin, and other lawyers and prominent men.

It would be wrong to suppose that the adhesion of these men kept Spiritualism sober in New York. We have already seen that Edmonds, Tallmadge, and Bullard accepted almost every manifestation that was announced, and we find little more sobriety when we turn to the one or two scientific men who gave their names to the movement. The only two of these who were of any consequence were Professor Mapes and Professor Hare. They were both chemists —Mapes an agricultural chemist—and of advanced years. Professor Mapes, who was converted by Leah Fish, is not prominent in the movement, and I cannot ascertain if he persevered in it. Professor

Hare enthusiastically subscribed to it, and a few words may usefully be devoted to his case.

Hare was seventy-two years old, and drawing near the close of his life, when he was converted to Spiritualism in 1853. He had been a chemist of distinction, a professor at Pennsylvania University, but had retired from work. Like Professor Zöllner and Professor Lombroso, who would later be converted, he had entered upon his decay; and it is neither ungracious to point this out, nor quite straightforward with one's readers to tell of the adhesion of these men of science *without* adding this particular. Professor Hare gives, in his *Experimental Investigations* (1855), the chief evidence which won his assent. He devised certain mechanical tests, which we shall find Sir W. Crookes using in a slightly different form some years later. He took, for instance, a four-foot board, placed one end of it on a support, and laid the other end on a spring-balance. A glass of water was put on the board near the balance-end. A wire cage was lowered into the water, without touching the glass, and the medium was to put his fingers in the water—he could not touch the glass and so press on the board—and see if the board could be so forced down (by spirit-energy) as to indicate pressure on the balance. A force of eighteen pounds was registered.

Professor Hare was quite sure that his "cage" prevented the medium from pressing on the board through the glass, and he concluded that spirit-force alone explained the depression of the board. The

experiment was, of course, very indecisive. If we suppose for a moment that the medium was not honest, there are various ways in which he could have cheated an aged and short-sighted man. The precise degree of light is not stated, nor do we know whether the medium had time or opportunity to prepare. There is room to suppose that the medium could get a loop of some strong black material on the board and pull it down with his foot, for instance. Now the medium was Gordon, and Gordon, we shall see, is one of those mediums who offer us a plain alternative: gross fraud or extreme Spiritualism. The reader may prefer to suspend his judgment until we have seen a little more about Gordon. So far we have only seen that he was one of the dozen mediums in the extraordinary sitting at Partridge's house in New York.

But there are other things recorded by Professor Hare which will dispense most people from attaching serious importance to his judgment. Another medium of his was a sharp boy of eleven, in whose powers he had a strange belief. Things were taken from Professor Hare's bag, when he was travelling with the boy; and he astounds us by the facility with which he takes the boy's assurance that it had been done by spirits. There are several pages of quite pitiful stuff of this description. A sharp lad earned a comfortable living by duping a septuagenarian. It is kinder to leave Professor Hare's spiritualist work in oblivion and remember him only as a distinguished and devoted student of chemistry.

At the time his adhesion to the movement naturally helped its growth, and for another year or two the extraordinary ferment increased. By 1854, a contemporary writer tells us, there were thirty thousand mediums in the United States, and even the most extreme manifestations were applauded in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Rapping, writing, and the moving or lifting (levitation) of furniture were now phenomena almost too tame and primitive for the public. Speaking in tongues with which the medium was supposed to be unacquainted was a daily performance. Not only every language in Europe, but Chinese and Malay, Sanscrit and Hebrew, and all the Indian dialects of America were heard or written. "Unknown tongues," which defied the most learned linguists of America, were uttered in the trance; and they were, indeed, the safest for the medium to utter. Water was put in sealed bottles, and before the eyes of the spectators the water was gradually coloured. Sealed letters were read and answered. As early as 1854 a Boston medium, Mr. J. V. Mansfield, could give replies—sometimes in German, Greek, Arabic, Sanscrit, or Chinese—to a question brought in a letter, no matter how the envelope was fastened or sealed.

Another development in 1854 was the writing of messages or answers in letters of fire on the arms of sitters or of the medium. There is an early case at New York, which suggests that mediums began this practice by preparing designs or messages with some chemical on their own arms. A New York family

had, as was common at that time, a lady-medium staying with them. From Mrs. Hardinge's frequent remarks it is clear that mediums greatly appreciated hospitality of this kind, and one has only to reflect on the experience of the Foxes—living in a plain timber cottage in a tenth-rate village in 1848, and at the house of the proprietor of the *New York Tribune* in 1850—to realise that here is a human element which one has to take into account. In this case the New York family were entertaining a coloured man of some culture and distinction, who had, however, been born in slavery. The medium was not supposed to know who he was, and she approached the hostess in a state of affected astonishment. On her arm, in raised red lines and letters, was a representation of a negro in chains, with an appropriate motto. She said that it had suddenly appeared, and that she did not understand it. The historian gives us a moving description of the joyous ecstasies which followed this remarkable spirit-triumph.

Other mediums succeeded in producing these designs on the arms of sitters. A lady-medium of Waukegan wrote with her finger, which does not seem to have been examined for chemicals, on people's arms, and the message soon developed in letters of burning red, and quickly died away again. Charles Foster, another medium whose further career will interest us later, made "hundreds of converts," the historian says, by this comparatively simple device.

The musical phenomena continued to develop.

Mozart, Beethoven, and all the great musicians seem to have played more than they ever played in life, and the performances were applauded with that almost hypnotic fervour which, we saw, led distinguished Spiritualists to describe the singing of an Ohio farmer and his children as a "foretaste of heaven." Most popular of all in this department were the sisters Annie and Jennie Lord of Boston. They are described as invalids and very frail and feeble, and they assured people that they had no knowledge whatever of music. Yet in a darkened room, not only the drum and tambourine, but the 'cello, guitar, and accordion were passably played. To convince the sceptic, who might not be disposed to believe that they were entirely ignorant of music, physical feats were added which people regarded as utterly beyond the strength of the invalid ladies. In the end they would call for a light, and one of the mediums would be discovered sitting in her invalid chair on the table, the muscial instruments heaped all round her!

Stranger still was the mediumship of the daughter of the Rev. J. B. Ferguson, editor of the Nashville *Christian Magazine*, and a convert to Spiritualism. He himself tells us of the marvellous things done by his daughter in his own house; and one can quite understand that many emphatically declined to believe either that the well-known preacher was subject to an hallucination that would have done credit to a life-long lunatic or that his young daughter was guilty of gross fraud. There is, in fact, no ques-

tion of hallucination, for the things were done repeatedly before the whole family and friends. The daughter's age is not given, but it is clear that she was in her early teens. When her "power" was fully developed, she would, in the presence of eight members of the family, call for a clean cup and a silver spoon. She gave the cup to each to examine: which rather suggests the manner of an experienced conjuror. She then passed, she said, under the control of the spirit of an Indian who had had remarkable skill in chemistry. She stirred the spoon in the presumably empty cup, and presently there appeared in it a teaspoonful of some odoriferous ointment. With this she is said to have cured the ailments, however diverse, of every member of the family, and every negro on the plantation. Here, of course, the power of imagination may not unjustly be invoked; but the earlier part of the performance—whatever interpretation one puts on it—is a fact of observation. The little girl prescribed for patients in the district. For one man, who was himself a doctor and confirms this story (so the Rev. J. B. Ferguson wrote), she prescribed "chalybeate water." There was none to be had. She took a tumbler of plain water, stirred it with the spoon, and turned it into chalybeate water. It should be added that Mrs. Ferguson also was a medium.

Naturally, the only point to which I draw the attention of a modern reader is the action of the girl. The cures may or may not have occurred; the water may or may not have been altered (or substituted).

In this illusion and exaggeration may find a place. But here are the wife and young daughter of a well-known clergyman professing to achieve a stupendous miracle, and undeniably producing some fluid in a cup which they have expressly described as empty. Even a Spiritualist, one imagines, will not claim that there was anything but trickery in it. If in 1854 the spirits found a form of manifestation which was of such material service to men as well as so convincing, the immediate abandonment of it would be inexplicable.

Such things were happening in all parts of America, and it is far more important to study them than the doings of the professional mediums. Another instance in 1854 is borrowed by Mrs. Hardinge from the Niagara *Democrat*. A young woman who was an amateur medium, and who so shrank from publicity that she refused to let her name appear, felt a strange impulse as she walked along the street with her companion. She suddenly quitted her companion, made for the railway, and walked a considerable distance along the line. There she found a child asleep "across one of the rails." A train was just approaching, and she had barely time to snatch the child and jump aside. The story is so clumsy that one hesitates to reproduce it. Even on the hottest summer's day a drowsy child would hardly fall asleep across a ridge of metal standing out six or eight inches above the ground. It is the psychology that is interesting. This young lady tells an obvious untruth to get credit for superior powers. It was being done all over America.

In such a world the professional mediums were audacious. I have spoken of Henry Gordon, one of the chief mediums. He was a young Springfield man who developed his sensational "powers" at the beginning of the movement. "Levitation" was his chief original manifestation: that is to say, he was believed to be raised from the ground by spirit-force and carried to the ceiling or into the next room. In those early days no one troubled in the least about levers or cantilevers or spirit-made machinery. Spirit was spirit, and could do anything. Gordon had not the least difficulty in persuading the American Spiritualists that he was repeatedly raised from the ground. The room was always dark, and any person who cares to read the various accounts of his levitations will notice that the witnesses merely accept his assurance, as a rule, that he is floating about it. He constantly cries, in the dark, that he is "going up," or floating near the ceiling. Beyond that they have only the sound of his voice and an occasional touch of his foot. Any acrobatic person could do it in the dark.

One record of a levitation by Gordon is interesting from the psychological point of view, which is so important in the study of Spiritualism. Dr. Hallock, a New York medical man, was one of the Spiritualists on whose scientific training and seriousness of character less cultivated people were accustomed to rely. At a Conference in New York in 1854 he made a singular statement. He had been lecturing at Philadelphia on the previous Sunday: not years

before, be it noted, or even weeks before. It was afternoon, the room was "perfectly well lighted," and there were several hundred persons present. Amongst them was Henry Gordon, who sat some distance down the hall, but directly in front of the speaker. The official report makes Dr. Hallock say, and there is no doubt whatever that he did say, that Gordon "rose in the air without any human aid, till the speaker beheld him floating so high that his feet just grazed the top of the seat, above which he hung in the air." We are told that "the attention of the entire congregation was riveted on him," and that the miracle occurred "in a crowded assembly and the full light of day." Dr. Hallock, in fact, expressly speaks of the jubilation that broke from the hundreds of witnesses. "I cannot describe that Pentecostal scene in words," he says.[1]

Here is, decidedly, the greatest manifestation in the history of Spiritualism. Levitation of the medium is so rare and difficult that it has not occurred for decades. The other cases recorded are all in partial or (generally) total darkness. But this levitation is described as occurring in "the full light of day," a few yards from one of the most competent observers in the movement, who vouches that his eyes and those of hundreds of others were "riveted" on Gordon. Where would one expect the hundreds of thousands of American Spiritualists to detect a flaw in this case? Yet it is practically certain, whatever one's belief about these matters,

[1] Mrs. Hardinge's *History* (from the official report), p. 279.

that it was a sheer hallucination, on the part of a medical man, in the failing light of an afternoon indoors. Mr. Podmore shows that Dr. Hallock's words were confirmed by no one. Undoubtedly the consentient testimony of even fifty witnesses to an event which, if it were true, surpasses anything that Eusapia Palladino ever did, would have been a weighty document. Dr. Hallock said that there were at least three hundred—I take the capacity of the hall from a different page—witnesses. It is quite useless to suggest that the spiritualist lawyers and judges of New York were not alive to the value of this testimony. They probably *made* inquiries at Boston; and not another witness appears. Mendacity on the part of Dr. Hallock is out of the question. But that there was an extraordinary hallucination on the part of one of the best-trained observers in the early movement is beyond serious question. And the most amazing part of it is the description of the "Pentecostal scene"! No one in Boston has a word about the matter.

To us, perhaps, this psychological state seems incomprehensible, but it was actually epidemic in some parts of the United States in the early 'fifties. There were whole districts in Pennsylvania which were known as "the burnt districts." They were supposed to have been swept by a Pentecostal conflagration. The spiritualist press reported that a clergyman was one day possessed in the middle of a sermon in one of these districts. He jumped from the pulpit into the middle of his congregation. Flames, pillars of fire, and clouds

of smoke broke out, and were seen by all; so it was said. The whole congregation was seized by the spirit-influence. They mounted the benches, and all—men, women, and children—began to shout in strange tongues. On other occasions this chapel rocked as if there were an earthquake. At all events, these reports were so gravely reproduced and discussed that the orthodox citizens of Meadville decided to suppress the "devilry," and they locked the Spiritualists out of their building. They went out into the woods to hold their services, and the collective hallucinations continued for a long time. Even people who watched them from a distance reported that they saw shining angels moving about amongst the congregation.

In the black districts, to which the fire spread, there were remarkable "manifestations." Negroes under the influence would thrust their hands into blazing fires, or stand with naked feet on fires for several minutes. We shall see Daniel Dunglas Home prudently imitate this a little later in London. Other new phenomena appeared every month, and the spiritualist paper that could get hold of the most wonderful stories naturally secured the best circulation. There was little sobriety anywhere. The Rev. C. Hammond published a work in which he claimed to have received from the spirit of Thomas Paine a long account of his experiences in the next world.[1] Dr. Dexter, a prominent New York Spiritualist and friend of Judge Edmonds, gave long communications from the spirit of Swedenborg (who spelled his own

[1] *The Pilgrimage of Thomas Paine*, 1852.

name Sweedenborg), Bacon, and others. Tallmadge and Edmonds pronounced these effusions "sublime." Tallmadge equally admired a large work which a writing medium, Charles Linton, professed to produce in four months under spirit-influence.[1] Less educated people admired a Latin sonnet which was dictated by Milton through a young lady; though it was not a sonnet, and there was not a word of genuine Latin in it.

Other mediums produced scientific lore from the spirits of dead scientists. A story still circulates in spiritualist literature that a medium first announced to the world the real motion of the satellites of Uranus, though Flammarion himself has thoroughly discredited it in his *Forces Naturelles Inconnues* (pp. 75–80). Astronomy was then in its most interesting stage of advance (in popular esteem), but the contributions to the science by the supposed spirits of the dead were all nonsensical. Every medium who touched the subject gave inhabitants to the planet Jupiter, which we now know to be red-hot. Geology was taken up by others. A farmer's boy named Hudson Tuttle produced a great geological "panorama" (apparently a painting of strata, with types of fossils) of his district on "eight hundred feet of canvas." It was, as usual, reported that the boy was normally quite ignorant of geology; and it was said that "many eminent professors" (not named) testified to the scientific accuracy of the picture.

The whole voluminous output of spirit-communica-

[1] *The Healing of the Nations*, 1855.

tions on science is seen to-day to be a poorly digested mess of the scientific literature of the 'forties and 'fifties. The enormous poetic output has not given a single piece to literature. The musical output is completely and disdainfully forgotten. The artistic output has not contributed a single specimen even to the very moderate American art of that time. Yet in the 'fifties hundreds of thousands of men and women, many of considerable culture, believed that all these productions were supernormal. They were, in the phrase which had so recently been popular, "mesmerised." The most vapid productions—literary, musical, or artistic—were described as "exquisite" and "sublime." A large part of America was in a state of waking dream. We have now to see how the early development produced its natural fruits in America, disillusion and decay, before the movement materially spread to other lands.

CHAPTER V

THE RECANTATION-MOVEMENT

We shall see presently that there was very little Spiritualism in Europe until after 1860. The first ten years of the history of the movement, which are the most important for understanding it, keep us almost entirely to America. Nearly every variety of manifestation began in those ten years, and in them are exemplified every type and shade of psychological outfit. Only at a very much later stage do we find materially new departures which will merit special consideration. It is therefore advisable to understand clearly the first decade of the movement in America, and the study of this will now be completed by a short survey of what was called at the time, and Mrs. Hardinge calls, "the recantation-movement."

This began in the later 'fifties. I have given the names of a number of men of some distinction who adhered to the movement. We must not exaggerate their importance. Probably the reader does not know, and would find it difficult to ascertain, the name of a single judge, State-governor, or professor of the United States between 1850 and 1870, except the names of Edmonds, Tallmadge, and Hare. It is quite certain that these latter names would to-day

be just as unknown as all the others if it were not for their constant reappearance in literature about Spiritualism. They were men of some relative distinction in their day, but would have been quite unknown when their day was over. In any case, it is important to notice that these men were all converted to the movement in its first six or seven years. Robert Dale Owen, son of the great Welsh reformer, was converted in the same period. Lloyd Garrison and Abraham Lincoln gave some sort of testimony to it in that period; though from the complete silence of their biographers one must conclude that it was in their case merely a temporary inclination to believe, and that it did not last.

The main fact is, that after 1857 hardly any new names of distinction are added to the list in America. A period of caution succeeded the first eight or nine years of emotional credulity. Then there occurred a number of exposures and scandals, and the general press, which had for a time been bewildered, and had often repeated wonderful stories in a mood of neutrality, became very critical and disdainful. So large a number of the new enthusiasts now fell away that the spiritualist journals reflected much irritation and despondency.

One cause of the set-back was the emergence in the movement of types or groups of men and women who greatly scandalised the majority. Mr. Podmore is not at all lenient in his history to the early mediums and leaders generally, but he refers with respect to the high character of some of them. One of these

is John Murray Spear, who is described as "one of the most attractive figures among the early Spiritualists," and a man of "childlike simplicity."[1] It is an unfortunate choice of a hero. Mrs. Hardinge reflects the temper of the majority of the American Spiritualists of the time when she says: "Mr. Spear's peculiar tone, language, and views, were not accepted or sympathised in by any large class of American Spiritualists." In this, she is more polite than the contemporary leaders, who attacked Spear with great violence. No doubt much of the hostility to him was based upon dislike of his socialist views, but a few notes on his career will show that there were other and more serious grounds.

There had been since the beginning of the century—since the French Revolution, in fact—a certain amount of communism and of what is called "free love" in America. The remarkable socialist community which Robert Owen had founded at New Harmony (1825–8) had brought together thousands of enthusiasts of this type, and the subsequent lecturing of the aged reformer and of his son, Robert Dale Owen, kept socialism alive in America. Neither of the Owens believed in free love, but Robert Owen, who was an obscure and poor writer, had attacked the defects of the existing system of marriage in such language that he was widely supposed to favour free love, and the theory had much acceptance amongst his followers in both England and America. Mrs. Hardinge, admitting that there was a great deal

[1] *Modern Spiritualism*, i, p. 214.

of free love amongst the early Spiritualists, pleads that it had " permeated America " before 1848, and was merely attracted to, not inspired by, Spiritualism. Owen and his son were both converted to Spiritualism in the 'fifties, and their followers very largely embraced it.

John Murray Spear was one of the unattached enthusiasts who propagated what was then called Socialism—the name came from Robert Owen—and who was attracted to the humanitarian or millennial aspect of Spiritualism. I have earlier explained that from the time of Andrew Jackson Davis it incorporated the vague dream of regenerating the earth as well as the idea of a better world after death. Spear came into prominence in 1853. Minerals were discovered in Chautauqua County, and Spear led a band of spiritualist communists to found a colony there. They were, after a struggle, ejected from the first district of their choice, and they settled at Kiantone Springs. There seems to be no doubt that free-love ideas were here put into practice, as is the tendency in all such communities, and considerable scandal was caused.

In 1854 Spear came again into prominence in the spiritualist press, in which he still had many admirers. His degree of culture may be gathered from his theory of the spirit-world. The eager spirits of the dead had, he said, organised themselves in expert groups or colleges, in order to assist in the regeneration of the earth, and so there were bands of " Governmentizers, Educationizers, Agriculturalizers, Healthfulizers,

Electrizers," and so on. The "Electrizers" had communicated to him the plan of a new electric motor which was to revolutionise industry and enable him to carry out the familiar dream—four hours' work a day and wealth for all. The *New Era* published discreetly vague but thrilling anticipations of the coming revolution. A new and fierce controversy shook the spiritualist world. Spear's rivals openly declared it a swindle; his admirers retorted that the machine actually existed in a certain well-guarded shed, and some of them were permitted to see it. After some months of bitter quarrel he was challenged to produce it. He then announced in the spiritualist press that "a rude mob, stimulated by the coarse and ribald remarks of the public journals," had invaded the shed and broken his motor to pieces; and that the angelic "Association of Electrizers" had concluded that humanity was not yet ripe for the revelation, and had forbidden him to reconstruct his motor.

These things put a certain check on what seemed for a time to be the almost illimitable credulity of the enthusiasts. It was obvious that charlatans and adventurers were at work in the movement. And such experiences now multiplied. I have given one in a previous chapter. Here is another.

In 1854 there arose in Cincinnati, as a result of Spear's missionary enterprise, a very curious "Order of the Patriarchs." Its own story of its foundation was that a man one day received by mail a large

box containing a marble slab with a strange and unintelligible message carved on it. He consulted a clairvoyant, and the "spirits" announced that the characters on the marble, which they translated, were the rules of an "Order of the Patriarchs." The rules were assuredly patriarchal in their simplicity and closely related to the polygamy of the early Hebrews. In plain English, the man was "directed" to form a free-love community, and for some months, until indignant and respectable citizens intervened, a large group of men and women joyfully carried out the rules of the new Order.

Some strange things occurred amongst the uneducated followers of Owen in England, but these American developments, which would have been quite impossible in the old world, show that the difference of conditions across the Atlantic was an element which we have to take seriously into account. Quite a number of such things occurred in the early spiritualist world. In 1855 a "Harmonial Society" was founded in Kansas. It was, as usual, a sort of Owenite "village of co-operation" with a spiritualist creed. A "Dr." and Mrs. Spencer—in those days, of course, degrees could be bought or invented—induced about fifty others, who had a little money, to join them in forming an agricultural colony. They bought a large tract of land, pooled their funds, and settled down to a joyous life under direct spirit-guidance. Perhaps the reader will be better enabled to put himself into the atmosphere of these com-

munities if I quote one of the hymns which the spirits dictated to Dr. Spencer:

"The car of life is passing by,
They call for all who will, to come
And take a seat and ride with us,
Who are bound for Heaven's immortal shore.

"The fare is cheap and food is plain,
For you can eat as you ride along;
For there is no grease to spoil your clothes,
No bone to pick, or scales of fish to interfere."

"Heaven's immortal shore" was really a secondary consideration in these enterprises. They were Owenite social experiments. The soil was rich and cheap; the capital was ample, for we read of one member bringing five thousand dollars to the common bag; and life was healthy and very free.

But the Spencers, who were crude adventurers, overreached themselves. The last two lines of the hymn will have caught the reader's attention. The spirits enjoined a vegetarian diet; and it was to be very sparing until they reached the state of perfection. Naturally, Dr. and Mrs. Spencer had reached a state of perfection, and they lived well and dressed handsomely. Murmurs arose, and there was some reluctance to believe Mrs. Spencer's assurance that the "Parisian shawl, dress, and bonnet" and her full purse were presents direct from spirit-land. When the murmurs grew to mutiny, the Spencers fled, with all the portable property they could collect. Angry members pursued them to the cities, and the spiritualist press presented another scandal amidst the "Pentecostal" outpour.

Simultaneously the exposure of mediums increased. Modern spiritualist historians of some culture, like Mr. Hill and Professor Hyslop, do not hesitate to regard most of the wonderful things we have described in the last two chapters as fraudulent. Credulity was at a maximum, and money abounded. Hundreds of thousands had, as I said, a firm conviction that a new economy had been instituted on this planet, and the ordinary rules of prudence and customary ideas of what was possible or probable were ignored. Lecturers and mediums fostered this psychological mood by the most flowery and impassioned speeches. It was a natural, and indeed inevitable, result that a large number of adventurers entered the movement as mediums. We may regard with entire sympathy the thousands of refined or simple people who believed that they were communicating once more with beloved relatives who had passed away. We are bound to respect the honest belief of Judge Edmonds and Governor Tallmadge, of Robert Owen and Robert Dale Owen, that they were trying to open the hearts of men to a revelation which would bring great consolation to the distressed and moral advancement to all. But the less reputable elements were just as natural, and they are just as important for us to consider.

From the first there were isolated exposures of fraudulent mediums. After 1855 they were more frequent, as the mediums (if we include writing mediums) now numbered something like fifty thousand. Bly, Melville, Fay, Paine, Randolph, Whitney, and

others were plainly detected in fraud. It is not worth while enlarging on these exposures, but the case of Paine, a Worcester medium, is interesting. A group of sceptical or suspicious sitters tore up the carpet of his room, and discovered wires leading up to the table on which the "raps" had occurred. Paine boldly addressed the New York Congress of Spiritualists soon afterwards. He explained that the exposers had merely spoiled prematurely a very praiseworthy design of his. He was developing an ingenious system of deception solely for the purpose of afterwards detecting and exposing fraudulent mediums! This was too much for most of the New York Spiritualists, and he was generally discredited. His words suggest that there were already, notoriously, many cheats amongst the mediums.

Another case, which occurred at Columbus (Ohio), is psychologically interesting. A medium named Miss Vinson and an elderly Methodist clergyman—a not unusual combination—were giving public sittings. A number of musical instruments were suspended on a string, the lights were extinguished, and the "spirits" played the instruments. The performance was of the crudest description. For its success it depends entirely on one's trust in the character of a clergyman and the apparent state of trance of the young lady. There were many who had not the required confidence, and one night two men turned on their dark lanterns while the ghostly music proceeded. They, of course, found the venerable

clergyman and the "entranced" medium playing the various instruments.

In spiritualist circles the bad effect of this exposure was redeemed by a local medium named Wallcutt. He had been present at the performance, and he had "clairvoyantly" seen the two adventurers playing the instruments in the dark. He was about to start up and warn the audience, but spirit-hands held him to his seat, and a spirit-voice whispered: "Sit still for your life." He afterwards realised that if he had arisen and gone forward when he intended, the lanterns which were turned on would have discovered him standing near the two performers, and he would have been involved in the scandal! So disaster was turned into triumph. The Spiritualists of Columbus could not doubt the word of their own medium, and others were not disposed to do so.[1]

In 1857 some of the more famous mediums received a nasty check. The cry, which is now familiar, that "orthodox" science was deliberately shirking its duty to investigate the phenomena, had been raised, and the professors of Harvard University declared their readiness to conduct an inquiry. The editor of the Boston *Courier* offered five hundred dollars for the exhibition of any genuine spiritualist phenomena, and three professors were to be the judges. Harvard was then the leading university of America. As on all such occasions, it was the mediums who, when the

[1] Mrs. Hardinge, who tells the story in her *History of American Spiritualism* (pp. 245–7), has not the least doubt about it.

opportunity actually arose, wished to avoid the inquiry, but the challenge was too serious to be ignored, and Mrs. Brown (Leah Fox), Catherine Fox, and four other mediums were summoned to Boston for the great triumph of Spiritualism. The sittings were an ignominious failure. This group of the most powerful mediums in America could do nothing under the eyes of the professors, and a severe blow was felt. Most Spiritualists admitted the contention of the mediums, that the atmosphere was hostile, and the conditions were unjust; but the failure, coming after so many suspicious exposures, stimulated the "recantation-movement."

In the later 'fifties and the early 'sixties we find a constant note of despondency in the spiritualist press. New marvels are constantly announced, but not with the old confidence. There is obviously a large critical audience. There are, repeatedly, irritated references to people who have withdrawn before the storm of popular ridicule, or who have been so misguided as to reject the truth because fraud had crept in here and there. No new conversions of any consequence were announced. There were many who predicted the speedy collapse of the whole movement. Mediums began to look for new fields overseas. The cruder frauds gradually disappeared. Young ladies of gentle birth and their mothers ceased to produce marvellous syrups in empty cups by stirring the air with a spoon, or to talk Arabic or Sanscrit under spirit-influence. The older of the distinguished recruits, like Professor Hare, died, and some of the

others seem to have fallen away, as we hear no more about their patronage after the 'fifties.

In a word, what one may call the epidemic stage of Spiritualism was over. What has since come to be called " the psychology of the crowd " began to work against Spiritualism instead of for it, as it had done for some years. The prevailing sentiment was hostile. The marvellous stories which had once captivated whole districts were now greeted with laughter. The painfully large number of middle-class ladies who had not hesitated to profess extraordinary powers in the 'fifties shrank materially. All the very promising young ladies we have mentioned in previous chapters seem, according to the chronicle of the 'sixties, to have lost or resigned their capabilities. There was no longer the same large social encouragement. In rural districts the crudest mediums still flourished, but in towns there was a change of atmosphere. The abler mediums responded to this change.

They responded, as was usual, by suiting the manifestations to more critical eyes and finding new varieties of phenomena. In the latter respect the change was less than is usually represented, because, as we saw, nearly every class of spiritualist phenomena was already witnessed in the 'fifties. Every type of musical instrument was played. Questions brought in closed and sealed envelopes were read and answered.[1] Mediums were bound with ropes, yet

[1] I am here dealing historically with these matters. The reader who would like to know how these things were done may consult my little work, *Is Spiritualism Based on Fraud?* (1920)

their coats were stripped from them and the knots were found intact. Furniture moved in every conceivable way. Mediums were lifted to the ceiling with a facility which has never since been equalled. Hands were thrust into blazing fires. All known tongues, and some unknown, were spoken in a state of trance. Birds were "apported." Hands and arms were "materialised" and made visible to sitters.

Progress therefore consisted in perfecting and developing these kinds of manifestations, and meeting the "precautions" which a partly disillusioned public affected to take. We come to the time of the famous mediums of the 'sixties and 'seventies, and, before we begin to consider the spread of the movement to England and other countries, we may find it useful to glance at some of these. Already we have met a few names which are very prominent in the annals of early Spiritualism. We know the whole Fox family, which will remain at the very core of the movement until the later 'eighties. We have seen the somewhat ambiguous *début* of Fowler and Gordon and a few others. This chapter may introduce a few more before we pass to England.

Daniel Dunglas Home was by far the most important of these. The early career of this remarkable medium is known only from his own words. He professes that his father was an illegitimate son of the tenth Earl of Home; that he was born near Edinburgh in 1833, adopted as a baby by his mother's sister, and taken to America when he was nine years old. He says (in his autobiography) that he heard

from his aunt that his cradle used to be rocked by invisible hands, and that after his mother's death in 1850 his aunt's house was so disturbed by spirit-manifestations that she turned him out of doors. Friends, he says, gave him hospitality, and for them he displayed his mediumistic powers. Almost immediately, in the early 'fifties, he became a very popular medium, and he was studied by Judge Edmonds, Professor Hare, and other leading Spiritualists.

There is no need here to examine his story very closely. The writer on Home in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, who is not at all sceptical, tells us that he was the son of William Home and Elizabeth McNeill: in other words he was himself an illegitimate child, as the complete absence of references to his father and the early adoption by an aunt suggest to us. No man is responsible for being born out of wedlock, but it must be added that Home's claim of relationship to the Scottish aristocracy is suspect. He was invariably known as Daniel Hume until he visited London in 1855. He may have then learned that there was an Earl of Home, and that aristocratic blood, even wrongly derived, was a most potent letter of introduction. It is as Daniel Hume that we have to follow his early career in America.

Quite possibly his Scottish aunt turned him out of doors when, as the news of the "Rochester rappings" spread, he developed uncanny powers. A pious Edinburgh body might be expected to resent such "devilry"; though it is hardly likely that the same lady had told him that his cradle had been rocked by angels.

By 1852 he was in great demand, holding six or seven large sittings every day. It was a remarkable advance, financially, for a youth of nineteen who had been penniless two years before. We do not know whether Hume charged a dollar a sitter in these early days. Whether he did or no, he throve. We shall presently meet him in London, dressed in the height of fashion, shining with jewellery, and putting up at a fashionable hotel. For the moment it is enough to have introduced him. The furniture moved abnormally in his presence. He held an accordion in one hand, and ghostly music was played on it. He was levitated (in pitch dark). Spirit-hands, or materialised hands, were seen by sitters.

Such were the early years of D. D. Home: a pale, slender, romantic-looking youth, with slim white hands and tapering fingers, with long hair and palish blue eyes which beamed a gentle piety and rolled a little as he delivered his very edifying remarks.

Simultaneously with him appeared the famous Davenport brothers, who were to follow him to England.

Ira Erastus and William Henry Davenport were newspaper-boys in Buffalo, not far from Rochester and Hydesville, when the early movement spread. In 1853 Ira Erastus was fourteen years old, his brother twelve years old, and his sister ten years old. It is not very audacious to assume that they read the constant accounts of spiritually gifted children in the newspapers they sold. Raps began to enliven their home; the furniture moved about in the familiar way.

Ira began to be levitated. William and Elizabeth soon reported that they also had been levitated. Ira claimed that he was one day carried seventy feet, and the marvel increased until it reached a climax. One day, while he was selling his papers, he fell into a trance. He awoke, he said, to find himself lying on the bank of the Niagara; and the spirits said that they had carried him across the river, which was half a mile wide, and back by way of a test of his and their powers. So, at least, we learn from that highly respectable authority, *A Biography of the Brothers Davenport* (1864), by "Dr." T. L. Nichols.

In the next year the two boys became professional mediums and held regular sittings. Their father at first had charge of them, but there seems to have been either a quarrel about money or a suspicion of collusion, and the Rev. J. B. Ferguson (whose remarkable family we remember), became their manager. The usual musical instruments were played in the dark, and the brothers added a new feature: you might bind them with cords, yet the instruments would be played. Professor Loomis—like most of these "professors," not a university professor, but a teacher at an unimportant college—investigated their doings, and guaranteed their genuineness. Amongst the faithful they did stupendous things. The spirits used to fire revolvers with great accuracy in the dark. William was levitated with such force that, although a heavy man hung on his legs, his head made a hole—which any person might see the next day—in the ceiling. In 1855 the Rev. J. B. Ferguson began to

conduct them from city to city, and we shall presently encounter them in England.

These and similar men and women were to carry the movement successfully through the "slump" which now occurred in America. I have described the causes of it, but may remind the reader of another, that may escape his memory. In the later 'fifties the fierce quarrel over the emancipation of the blacks began to dominate every other issue. The men and women who had in calmer days turned to investigate the promise of "the new revelation" now threw themselves into the fight for Abolition. As exposures increased, the intensity of this struggle also increased. In 1860 Abraham Lincoln became President. There were claims of a "Spiritualist President," which Lincoln completely ignored, and the revolt in the South soon engrossed attention. From 1861 to 1865 the Civil War dragged out its slow and terrible length. The interest passes for a time to other lands.

CHAPTER VI

THE INVASION OF EUROPE

A SIMPLE and fatal objection to the spiritualist view of what happened from 1850 to 1860 occurs to any unbiassed reader of the events. Take a map of the civilised world in 1848. Had there been colleges or associations of disembodied humans who wished to make a profound impression on the living humans, the course they ought to have adopted is clear. They ought simultaneously to have manifested in a score or a hundred centres: Hydesville and San Francisco, New York and London, Berlin and Buenos Aires. Instead of this we find the movement slowly spreading in waves from Hydesville. If it depended on human mediums learning something from each other, this is what we should expect and what we invariably find. The mediumising power spreads by contact, or by descriptions in the press. It takes a year to reach New York, four years to reach London or San Francisco, five years to Cuba, six years to South America, seven years to Turkey, and so on. Strange that spirits should have to submit to a geographical radiation from a single centre of the "earthly plane"! It is hardly possible to contend to-day, as the early spiritualist historians did, that the little wooden cottage of John

D. Fox in Hydesville had an "aura" which distinguished it from every other house on the globe: especially as it was promptly abandoned by the Foxes and not used for further manifestations.

I explained in the first chapter that the real preparation of the world for Spiritualism took place in Europe, from which animal magnetism and Swedenborgianism had spread to America. The chief centre of this preparatory work was Paris. I have spoken of Dr. Mesmer, of the interruption of the fashionable cult of animal magnetism by the Revolution, and of the return to its fascinating mysteries after 1820. In the later 'forties magnetism was combined with the Swedenborgian doctrine of spirits, as was more common in Germany, and an original form of Spiritualism was developed, before and independently of the American type. A certain Cahagnet was the chief interpreter of it. Through his *somnambules* (young women mesmerised into a state of trance) he professed to be in communication with the spirits of the dead, and Parisians went, as Americans did, to hold conversations with relatives who had "passed over." Cahagnet's two-volume book (*Magnétisme: Arcanes de la vie future dévoilés*) was published in 1848 and 1849, before any news came from America, and had a large circulation. The French therefore justly claim that their Spiritualism is not an American importation.

It is, however, doubtful if any of these earlier types of Spiritualism would have prospered. The American form was more positive and picturesque and impressive, and it was the introduction of this form which

determined the growth of the movement in France. A Mme. d'Abnour returned to France from America in 1849, and she set up a circle of the American type at Paris. It was to this circle that Flammarion, the astronomer, and Victorien Sardou, the great dramatist, belonged in their youth; as Flammarion, who never actually became a Spiritualist, describes in his *Forces Naturelles Inconnues*, and Sardou in his *Clef de la vie* (1857). Sardou made (under spirit-influence, he believed at the time) very curious drawings of life on Mars and on Jupiter (which is certainly not inhabited). Other writers were Baron du Potet de Sennevoy, Count von Szapary, Count A. de Gasparin, Professor Thury, and J. E. de Mirville (1853).

A Parisian teacher named H. D. Rivail, who kept a Pestalozzian Institute, joined the circle, and he was asked to compile a book of the results of their *séances*—a term which now came into general use, though it is merely the precise equivalent of the English "sitting," which is to be preferred. Under the pen-name of "Allan Kardec," by which he has since been generally known, Rivail, making much use of Mirville's work, wrote and published *Le livre des esprits* (1857), and in the following year he founded the *Revue Spirite*. This gave a great vogue to Spiritualism (or Spiritism, as the French generally called it) in France.

We need not follow it in detail, but there was another prominent enthusiast whose work had some echo in England. Baron von Güldenstubbe, a German-Russian who lived at Paris, had the idea of communicating directly with the spirits, without a

medium. He locked sheets of paper and a pencil in a box, and gave the key to his friend and fellow-enthusiast, the Count d'Ourches. They claimed that messages were found on the paper. He then began a series of experiments that lasted over twelve years. He put papers in all sorts of places where he thought spirits likely to linger, especially churches and graveyards, and claimed that he got about two thousand messages, in twenty different languages. The aristocratic names of the witnesses impressed many people, including Lord Brougham, but it is now openly suggested that the Baron and his sister Julie, another enthusiast, produced the messages fraudulently.[1]

In any case, the precautions were quite inadequate.

French Spiritism, of the Allan Kardec type, was mixed up with fantastic ideas about the transmigration of souls, and had little influence in England or elsewhere. In Germany the development was slower than in France or England. As I said in a previous chapter, the Germans had from the eighteenth century been more inclined to the spiritualist than the magnetic theory of abnormal phenomena. There had been at one time in the eighteenth century much discussion of a young woman, "the Seeress of Prevorst," who professed to put people in communication with the spirits of dead relatives. The long Napoleonic troubles had withdrawn attention to more serious matters, and it was not until the early 'fifties that interest revived. The works of Andrew Jackson Davis then arrived from America, and Professor

[1] See the article on Spiritualism in Hertzog's *Realencyklopädie*.

Nees and other animal magnetists tried to propagate their ideas. The news of further developments in America came slowly, and by 1853 there was a good deal of rapping and table-turning in Berlin. As in England and France, the table-turning mania spread just before the spiritualist theories came, and there were naturally many who preferred what they regarded as the simpler theory of spiritual influence to the scientific theory. In 1857 and 1858 works on Spiritualism began to appear. Professor Nees continued his almost futile struggle, but it was not until the later 'sixties that he had much success, and we will return to this afterwards.

In other countries it was largely a matter of accident when and how the movement was born. Thus a visitor from America introduced the idea at Constantinople in 1858, and there was quite a brisk centre amongst the Turks there for a time. But there was no originality and little life in the movement elsewhere in Europe, and we may confine our attention to England.

In England, as we saw, the French ideas of animal magnetism, which were considered "scientific," were cultivated by a few from the beginning of the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century. After 1820 the movement spread, and in 1843 there were, it is said, three hundred persons lecturing and experimenting on mesmeric lines in England. Dr. John Elliotson, one of the most distinguished of London physicians and professor at the University College, opened a mesmeric hospital in 1849, and he edited a paper,

The Zooist (1843–56), for propagating his ideas. He was a drastic materialist, and the movement was generally of the same character. Harriet Martineau was converted to it. This would seem a very strange preparation for Spiritualism, but the fact was that the movement brought before the people a number of phenomena which were regarded as mysterious and abnormal, and there was always a tendency to put a spiritual interpretation on them.

For some types of mind an obscure phenomenon is quite "explained" when you say that a spiritual agency produced the phenomenon. This tendency increased when, in the later 'forties, animal magnetism led to table-turning, and the mania spread from Edinburgh to Plymouth. If you make the sitters lay their hands on boards which rest on balls or sensitive rollers, you can detect even a slight involuntary push in any direction on their part. Scientific men did this, and showed conclusively that the table was involuntarily pushed round by the sitters. Many would not believe this demonstrative proof, and there was a very widespread disposition to believe in some uncanny force or other in 1849, when the mania was at its height. The clergy did not a little to help by declaring that the devil was in this table-turning. Quite a considerable literature of the subject arose.

There was only a very mild interest in the early reports of the American phenomena. There were no cables in those days, and such matters were not important, in the opinion of press-correspondents,

for the first year or two. But the interest grew, and in the autumn of 1852 the first American medium landed on our shores. Mrs. Hayden was the wife of the editor of the *Star-Spangled Banner*, who accompanied her. An English mesmeric lecturer named Stone had invited them, and the enterprise proved very profitable. The last phase of mesmerism had, as I said, prepared many for the new belief. In London, large numbers of people flocked to communicate with their dead through Mrs. Hayden, at half a guinea each. The answers were given by raps. A copy of the alphabet was put before the sitter, and he passed his finger over the letters. The raps were heard when the right letter was reached. In the confession of Margaretta Fox, which I have described, it was said that the medium watched the sitter closely, and gathered from faint changes of expression when the right letter was reached.

A second American medium, Mrs. Roberts, came to London about the same time, but her work was not important. Mrs. Hayden, however, made a serious impression. The press was generally hostile, but amongst the hundreds of people with guineas to spare who went to consult her were a few professional men, and she had the good fortune to impress some of them. Dr. Ashburner, a distinguished physician, came to the conclusion that the messages were genuine. He would not admit the existence of "immaterial essences," and is not properly described as a Spiritualist; but, like Lombroso at a later date, he main-

tained that the mind was of a more refined matter than the body, and survived it. Robert Chambers, author of the first important work on evolution (*Vestiges of Creation*), wrote about the phenomena in *Chambers's Journal*, with a very plain intimation that there was "something in them." He never openly embraced Spiritualism, but he must have helped its early growth. Still more important was Professor de Morgan, one of the most distinguished mathematicians of the time. He had Mrs. Hayden at his house, and he was entirely puzzled and not a little impressed. His wife became an enthusiastic Spiritualist, and wrote a book, *From Matter to Spirit* (1863), to which her husband contributed a respectful introduction. Professor de Morgan himself remained an agnostic,[1] but his opinion that there was something abnormal in the phenomena naturally gave great assistance to the cause.

Professor Mayo, of King's College, is sometimes counted by Spiritualists amongst the early converts, but they seem to be unaware that he had died in 1852, and had never heard of the American movement. His name is mentioned only because he wrote a mystic and rather fantastic article in *Blackwood* in 1847.

The most important convert, perhaps, was the great reformer Robert Owen, who was converted by Mrs. Hayden in 1853. Owen was then eighty-three years old, so that his personal endorsement

[1] As he intimates in this introduction, and as Mrs. de Morgan tells us in her *Memoir of A. de Morgan* (1882), p. 392.

of the evidence is of no consequence. But he still had numbers of devoted followers, and it was amongst these that Spiritualism first got a popular footing in England. Dr. Ashburner himself was an Owenite socialist. Owen promptly announced his new faith in his periodical, and for the remainder of his life he propagated it with all the courage and sincerity which distinguished his entire career. Almost immediately a group of Owenite socialists at Keighley, in Yorkshire, embraced Spiritualism, found a medium, and formed the first stable "circle" in England. If we ignore a paper (*The Spirit World*) which Mr. Hayden started in London, and which expired after a single issue, these Keighley socialists founded the first spiritualist organ, *The Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, which was a little later entitled *The British Spiritual Telegraph*.

It is chiefly from this little periodical that we gather the very precarious and struggling life of Spiritualism in England in the 'fifties. Only a few Mesmerists, Swedenborgians, and Owenites were interested in it. Reports of sensational occurrences had nothing like the success they had in America. A little girl in London was said to have given communications in Latin. A London mesmeric doctor found that his errand-boy, aged nine, was a medium. By the usual rapping replies to questions, the doctor learned that the boy's guardians were the spirits of Job, Enoch, Noah, and Lord Bacon; and it was said that they predicted to a day the outbreak of a cholera epidemic. It is admitted that the boy's limbs were

seen to move when the raps were heard; that the "spirits" exercised great discretion in admitting sitters; and that the messages often ordered sitters to make presents to the medium. Robert Owen went to consult him—a pathetic sight—and was directed to present the boy with a gun for shooting rabbits: which he did. It need hardly be said that such things generally provoked only smiles in London. There was no "Pentecostal" atmosphere. Mrs. de Morgan found, in 1854, that her servant Jane was a medium. The faithful servant reserved her rapping powers for her mistress, and only a few lady-friends were impressed.

It was natural that a certain number of amateur mediums should spring up here and there after the *éclat* of Mrs. Hayden's visit, but the failure to return of that lady, in spite of the profit of her tour, shows that little real work was done. During the whole period when America was afire with faith and phenomena, hardly any spiritualist life could be found in England. Owen and the Keighley Owenites continued to grasp at every faint report of new miracles. A Dr. Hardinge (mesmeric, of course) found a young lady medium—our eloquent and gushing historian, Mrs. Hardinge—and got men like Robert Chambers to endorse her. A "Charing Cross Spiritual Power Circle" was established at London. In the same year (1857) it turned into "The London Spiritualistic Union," and in the following year "The London Spiritualist Union"; but it remained very small and impotent.

Owen's enthusiasm was too obviously based on the failing power of old age. He published outrageous reports with the utmost credulity. One man discovered that Mrs. Hayden, who had put Owen into communication with the spirit of the Duke of Kent, was a fraud; and there was a long and serious correspondence. A Luton Quaker sent him some messages from the spirits of Milton and Shakespeare, which he had received through a boy of thirteen; and, though it was wretchedly poor stuff, Owen solemnly published it. A Newcastle circle claimed that they had the attendance in one night of 5,111 spirits, including David and twenty kings and queens of his dynasty, besides Homer, Cicero, Demosthenes, Luther, and John Knox. In short, England had on a very small scale the same experiences as America, though not the violent physical phenomena. Writing mediums arose in fair numbers, and everybody who was important enough to be written about in *Chambers's Encyclopædia* came back to earth to communicate. The Crimean War gave people more serious things to think about. Our recent experience would suggest that a war increases the growth of Spiritualism; but that was not the case until our time, and we will consider the reasons later.

In 1855 Daniel Dunglas Home arrived in London from the United States, and a more serious campaign opened. Home did not stay long, and he never attempted to reach more than a few wealthy people; but from the time of his visit the movement, which had in 1854 seemed hopeless, began slowly to grow.

We saw that only five years earlier Home (or Hume) had been a down-at-heel youth of seventeen, turned out of his aunt's house in a rough American small town and told to earn his living. He is generally described as an amateur medium who never charged sitters. The writers who say this do not seem to have considered how he lived after the time when, in 1850, his aunt threw him upon the world. In 1855 he was sent to England by the American Spiritualists, who subscribed to pay his expenses. The Haydens, in particular, were early friends of his. He was then evidently in no need of money. A diamond ring flashed on one of his long, dainty fingers. A large gold locket was conspicuous. His clothing seemed made for the grandson of the Earl of Home. We may, in fact, say that Home—as he now began to call himself—lived, directly or indirectly, on his abnormal powers from his eighteenth year until he died. The only other source of income mentioned is that at times he gave a few literary lectures and (in later years) did a little very mediocre sculpture; and the tickets for his lectures and the busts were mainly bought by his spiritualist patrons. It is gravely misleading to represent him as a man of means who held sittings in complete disinterestedness.

Home put up at Cox's Hotel, where Robert Owen lived many years, and was soon the craze of fashionable London. He had what ladies and journalists call a very "spiritual" appearance. He was pale and slender and unctuous. His thin white hands were nervous and sinewy, and he played the piano not

unskilfully. His conversation was very edifying: his person always neat—most people said foppish. Bulwer Lytton, Anthony Trollope, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sir David Brewster, Lord Brougham, and all sorts of notable people went to consult him, and many were impressed. Browning, as is well known, concluded that it was all fraud, and later wrote a scorching long poem on Home, entitled *Mr. Sludge, "the Medium"* (published in 1864). Home sent glowing reports to the United States, in which Sir David Brewster was quoted as an admirer. Upon this Sir David wrote a disdainful letter to the *Morning Advertiser*, in September, in the course of which he says:

"Were Mr. Home to assume the character of Wizard of the West, I would enjoy his exhibition as much as that of other conjurors; but when he pretends to possess the power of introducing among the feet of his audience the spirits of the dead . . . he insults religion and common sense." Sir David reduced to very insignificant proportions the phenomena he and Lord Brougham had witnessed, and Brougham made no sign of dissent. Brougham was, however, one of the most expert temporisers of his day, and he more than once said complimentary things about the new movement, without ever committing himself to it.

Home passed after a time to the house of a solicitor, Mr. Rymer, who lived at Ealing, and the sittings continued. To this date belongs the only claim that Home was detected in trickery. A Mr.

Merrifield was present at one of the sittings. Home's usual phenomena were messages, the moving of objects (presumably at a distance), and the playing of an accordion which he held with one hand under the shadow of the table. But from an early date in America he had been accustomed occasionally to "materialise" hands (as it was afterwards called). The sitters would, in the darkness, faintly see a ghostly hand and arm, or they might feel the touch of an icy limb.[1] Mr. Merrifield and the other sitters saw a "spirit-hand" stretch across the faintly lit space of the window. But Mr. Merrifield says that Home sat, or crouched, low in a low chair, and that the "spirit-hand" was a false limb on the end of Home's arm. At other times, he says, he saw that Home was using his foot. Mr. Podmore reproduces this letter of Mr. Merrifield's in his *Modern Spiritualism* (ii, 230), and makes light of it. He says that it was written in 1889, and puts only an "unsupported memory of events which took place thirty-four years before the account was written." Before he wrote his second work (*The Newer Spiritualism*, 1910), however, Mr. Podmore seems to have come to the very emphatic conviction that Home was an impostor, and he gives a very different, and quite accurate, account of the letter (p. 45). It was written, he says, not in 1889

[1] Some have been much impressed by the fact that the hands which touch them at Spiritualist sittings are abnormally cold. After making all allowance for imagination, it may be pointed out that Home's hands were normally very cold, and that scientific experiments within the last few months (June–July 1920) have shown that the mind has a remarkable influence on the temperature of the body.

(when it was published), but "in August 1855," when the event occurred. There is no serious reason to be sceptical about it.

As a rule, however, Home chose his sitters with care, and amongst the sitters selected only those to sit near him who were not critical. From England, in the winter of 1855, he passed to Italy, and for the next five years he scattered the seed of the new belief in various countries of Europe, and moved in society as far removed from that of his American home of five years earlier as it is possible to imagine. From Florence, where English residents provided grateful admirers, he went with a Polish nobleman to Naples. He then spent some time at Rome, was received in special audience by the Pope, and joined the Catholic Church. He seems to have had an idea of spending the rest of his life amongst his wealthy Continental admirers. The winter of 1857–8 he spent in France and Holland, and he gave sittings to the French Emperor and Empress, and, at the Hague, to the Queen of Holland. At Baden he held a sitting in the presence of the King of Prussia.

In Italy he had met, and converted, a Russian State-Councillor named Aksakoff, a wealthy man, and through him he gave an impulse to the growth of Spiritualism in Germany and Russia. The Church was, naturally, very hostile in Russia, and Aksakoff had to do most of his zealous propagandist work for the next twenty years in Germany. In 1858, however, he was permitted to have Home in Russia, and the aristocracy of St. Petersburg proved as apt and grate-

ful pupils as the aristocrats of the other capitals which "the grandson of the Earl of Home" had visited. Up to this time Home had had absolutely no means of subsistence beyond presents and hospitality from his patrons. He now married a daughter of a Russian general, Count de Kroll, with the warm approval of the aristocracy. The Emperor, Alexander II, gave him a diamond ring as a wedding present. It does not appear that Count de Kroll had great wealth, but his daughter brought Home a fair competence and a definite position in society, until she died in 1862. Her property was disputed, and Home brought a lawsuit against her relatives for it in Russia, and lost.

By this time he had returned to London, and we will resume the story of Spiritualism in England up to 1870. It will be realised that the early fortunes of Spiritualism in Europe are so bound up with D. D. Home that no apology is needed for this lengthy discussion of his movements. His "phenomena" were not at that time more remarkable than those of fifty mediums in the United States. He gave answers by raps, levitated the table, touched the sitters, played an accordion without touching the keys, and occasionally "materialised" a hand. Hundreds did these, and even more sensational things. But Home had no rival in the movement until—long after his death—Eusapia Palladino arose to greatness in Italy. For the world at large and its conversion he cared nothing. He lived mostly in the homes of well-to-do Spiritualists, and the sitters were guests of his hosts,

not critical folk who had paid a guinea for the right of severely examining the medium. But there can be no doubt that his choice of a career as a fashionable medium, moving in select circles and sitting only to them, had considerable influence on the growth of Spiritualism.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOVEMENT ESTABLISHED IN ENGLAND

The movement had, in the meantime, made slow progress in England. In 1855 London had produced a native medium who for many years, in spite of repeated charges of trickery, sustained the hopes of the English Spiritualists. This was Mrs. Everitt, wife of a Pentonville tailor. She began with rapped messages, and the customary movements of furniture. In the course of time she, in the dark, produced spirit-lights, direct spirit-voices, and direct messages (or messages supposed to be written by the spirits). Baron Goldenstübbe was, we may recall, now busy in Paris, and he presently came to London, and secured his wonderful messages among the mummies and bones of the British Museum and the tombs of Westminster Abbey.

In 1856 the American medium Randolph paid a visit to England, and he was followed in 1857 by Samuel Owen and in 1859 by the Rev. T. L. Harris. These were men of comparatively moderate claims, and they made little stir amongst the general public. More attention was paid to a new English medium, Mrs. Marshall, who appeared in 1858. Mrs. Marshall and her niece, who assisted her, introduced features

which were new to England, though not unknown in America. They would ask the sitters to throw their handkerchiefs under the table. One of the sitters would bring a piece of glass and hand it to Mrs. Marshall, who would smear it with a mixture of oil and whitening. She would put the glass for a few seconds under the table, and, when it was withdrawn, the message "Knot upon knot" was discovered upon it. Presently the handkerchiefs, all knotted, would be thrown from below upon the laps of the sitters. The customary raps and levitations would follow. The graceful feminine novelty of this introduction could not long survive brutal masculine criticism, and an article in Dickens's *All the Year Round* (July 1860) put a severe check on these amateur mediums.

The movement spread in these years rather by the sincere cultivation of the milder phenomena in family circles. A brother of Dr. Garth Wilkinson lost a son, and, in the sorrow of the bereavement, the whole family seems to have been drawn toward the promise of Spiritualism. Presently a younger son, aged twelve, and Mrs. Wilkinson discovered mediumistic powers. They wrote and sketched under, it was believed, spirit-influence. Mr. Wilkinson himself soon developed automatic writing. An esteemed family was thus won to the movement, and the belief spread to their friends. Mr. W. Howitt, a prominent worker in the early movement, and his family were thus converted. Mrs. de Morgan did similar work amongst her friends. All this, however,

amounted to very little, and the movement languished pitifully in England, while it boasted of its "two million" adherents in the United States, until D. D. Home returned to our shores in 1859 from his happy Continental tour. At once a new and powerful impulse was given to the movement.

The press had been up to this date so disdainful that very few had the courage to make a public claim of mediumship. In 1860 an important new departure was made by the appearance of an article entitled "Stranger than Fiction," in the *Cornhill*, the most fashionable literary monthly. It was not signed, but whispers soon communicated the fact that it was written by Robert Bell, a well-known dramatic critic; and as Thackeray was editor it was presumed that he was in sympathy with it. Thackeray, in fact, afterwards defended his action by saying that he had witnessed the phenomena and been greatly impressed; though it does not appear from his biography that he at any time became a definite Spiritualist, or persevered in his attitude of respect.

The article was not only of very great use to the movement, but it informs us of the progress Home had now made in the development of his powers. We are told that ghostly hands took flowers and objects from the table, or even broke geraniums from the plants at the window, and put them in the hands of the sitters. The room was faintly lit by only the light of a poor fire. The accordion was played—"exquisitely," of course—in Home's usual way: he

held it under the table with one hand, the key-end hanging down, his other hand being above the table, and it played.[1] But the greatest marvel was one which Home would henceforward use with considerable effect. He rose into the air, and floated about the room. It was pitch dark, and the sitters followed his movements only by his own voice from various parts of the room, as he called out that he was "rising," or was "near the ceiling." But they were permitted to touch his feet, which were certainly off the ground; and Mr. Bell says that they saw the outline of his body float horizontally across the feebly illuminated window-space.

Levitation of this kind was, we saw, well known in America some years before. It is curious that, while many Spiritualists contend that these early manifestations were genuine, no claim of phenomena of this description has been made in the last fifty years, in spite of the supposed development of mediumistic powers. The only claim I have seen is that of a young lady of Costa Rica in 1910, Ofelia Corralès; but Professor Reichel, who was present, and had surreptitiously brought in a piece of phosphorescent paper, saw that she was standing on a stool, and her whole story ended in a farce. The

[1] It is quite impossible to say in what this "playing" really consisted. Spiritualists call it "exquisite": others call it "a few squeaks." We have already seen the ease with which enthusiasts persuaded themselves that spirit-music or literature was exquisite. It need hardly be said that in a fairly darkened room the space under the table would be pitch dark. Mr. Podmore suggests that Home had threads to the other end of the accordion, or even a small musical box in his pocket.

fact that these early levitations of the medium were merely announced by the mediums themselves, in pitch darkness, disposes our more cultivated Spiritualists to ignore them. An athletic man, as Home or Gordon was, could easily mount furniture in the dark, and present his feet to sitters or address them from the ceiling. The floating of Home's figure across the window may seem less easy to explain, but fortunately we have another account of the same performance by Home about the same time, and this more careful recorder (in the *Spiritual Magazine*) tells us that Home's legs first advanced across the window-space, went back, and then the head-half of his body appeared in profile. This would not be beyond the power of an acrobat. The fact is, that no one ever saw the *entire* body of Home or any other medium plainly floating in the air without support.

These criticisms naturally occur to the cold reader of the written narrative years after the event, but it will be understood that the article in the *Cornhill* had great weight in 1860, and attracted very wide attention to the movement. The sittings which Bell described had been held at the house of no less a person than Mr. Milner Gibson, President of the Board of Trade. Home had met and converted Mrs. Gibson on the Continent. His circle of aristocratic admirers in London grew rapidly, and the new favour in high quarters encouraged the popular movement. Another American medium, Mr. J. R. M. Squire, one of the editors of *The Banner of Light* and a friend of Home, came over in 1861. He did heavy physical

phenomena, which had as yet been little known in England, and was an amateur medium. The press announced that he was presented at court by the American Minister. It was another triumph for the movement.

Throughout the 'sixties, in fact, the new religion gained steadily in England. A more reputable type of organ, the *Spiritual Magazine*, was founded in London in 1860, with W. M. Wilkinson and another as editors; and Howitt, a cultivated man, often contributed to it. Some of the grosser frauds were pointed out in its columns. When Foster came over from America in 1861, and read messages written on slips of paper and rolled into pellets, or showed spirit-messages in red letters (probably done with a match or a blunt pencil) on his arm, the *Spiritual Magazine* candidly warned its readers. The editors said that they had received from Judge Edmonds "sickening details of his [Foster's] criminality." He was, in fact, an undisputed fraud, and was often exposed. He had, nevertheless, a good run in England in 1861–2, and other American mediums spent profitable tours with impunity. Bly, whose trickery became so clear that in 1865 the American police compelled him to take out a conjuror's licence, again visited England. Colchester and other mediums who were eventually discarded also helped the growing movement. Mrs. Emma Hardinge began (1862) the "inspirational addresses" which made her for twenty years a very prominent figure.

In the late summer of 1864 a more imposing

delegation from America reached London: the Davenport brothers and their clerical controller, the Rev. J. B. Ferguson, father of the gifted child who produced medical syrups by stirring an empty cup. A secretary and an understudy to the Davenports completed the troupe. The brothers were now, respectively, twenty-five and twenty-three years old: tall, lithe, pale men, with long dark hair and dark eyes. Their spirit-controls no longer fired revolvers in the dark, but the musical manifestations were more developed. Any person in the audience might mount the platform and bind the mediums with stout cords, yet the instruments which were placed near them in the cabinet played ghostly music soon after the closing of the cabinet. In a darkened room the instruments would be carried or hurled about, yet, when the lights were introduced, the mediums were found to be bound securely as at the beginning. At their first public sitting in London a naval man from the audience tied the mediums, with great confidence in his knowledge of ropes and knots. The instruments played as usual, and the sailor found his knots apparently undisturbed at the end.

A more serious public discussion followed these manifestations. The challenge to the audience—always a large and very mixed audience—was felt to indicate a very easy sense of honesty on the part of the mediums. Even people who shrank from the spiritualist theory were compelled to admit the facts, and there was much talk about "magnetic" or "odylic"

or "ectenic" forces, and all the jargon of the pseudo-scientific school of occult matters. The end of the story will be remembered, and need not here be told at length. Conjurors, noticing the thin hands and powerful muscles of the mediums, began to reproduce their performances. Tolmaque was in the field in October. Maskelyne got himself included in the committee on their platform in a provincial town, and, owing to the "accidental" fall of a curtain (one wonders what Mr. Maskelyne *could* have told about that lucky accident), which let a little light upon the darkness, he saw that they could extricate themselves from the ropes.

At last, in February 1865, the brothers encountered a "Gordian knot." Some men in their audience at Liverpool knew a knot, the "Tom Fool's knot," which the brothers did not know, and the spirits were powerless. The clerical showman came to their assistance by declaring that the cords were so tight as to impede the circulation, and he cut them. As there was a doctor at hand who certified that this was untrue, the audience drove the brothers from Liverpool. The secret of the knot was sent to other towns where they were announced, and they were forced to return to America. They boldly tried England again in 1868, but Mr. Maskelyne now had complete command of their tricks, and gave public exhibitions. It is not without interest to recall that a well-known Spiritualist, Mr. B. Coleman, seriously contended in the spiritualist press that Mr. Maskelyne was a genuine medium, but it paid him better to pretend that he was a conjuror!

One wonders how D. D. Home would have fared as a conjuror in comparison with his long and pleasant career as a medium.

Apart from these prominent and professional mediums whom few would now hesitate to describe as frauds, there was a progressive development of what one may call domestic Spiritualism: the sincere and enthusiastic faith which witnesses phenomena that the psychologist must assist us to understand. There was never a Pentecostal wave in England. There were no "burnt districts." But individuals and groups of individuals of the type of Mrs. de Morgan continued to increase in the later 'sixties, and they assured each other of marvellous experiences. "Clairvoyance" became a widely distributed gift. Mrs. de Morgan claimed that she saw spirits. Mr. Cromwell Varley, a well-known electrician who now joined the movement, claimed and believed that he had clairvoyant power. Young ladies began to see spiritual haloes and auras about the persons of preachers, or tongues of flame above them. One lady could tell the degree of spirituality of a preacher by the colour of the "aura" round him.

Spirit-drawing and painting increased greatly. In 1867 a Miss Houghton sent a number of such paintings to the Academy, which rejected them, and with much scorn of Philistine prejudice and obtuseness she invited the public to see them in a private gallery. Spirit-guidance became, with many of these ladies, a normal part of life. If they sought a new house, they merely went out into the street and allowed their

spirit-controls to guide them to a suitable dwelling. They left it to the same guidance to choose the wall-paper and furniture. A quaint insight into this extraordinary world is afforded by Miss Houghton's *Evenings at Home* (1881). She believed that a band of seventy archangels accompanied and directed her.

In this increasingly favourable atmosphere mediums rose and fell every year, and the spiritualist papers had momentary flutters of expectation. There was little Willie Turketine, aged thirteen, who for a year or two duped his elders with a facility which must have made young folk cynical in those days. From 1867 to 1869 he held the attention of the more enthusiastic Spiritualists. Willie sat at one end of the room, and insisted that the sitters should remain at the other end. The lights were extinguished, and the spirits sang hymns, in a sweet, child-like voice, and played musical instruments which had been put for them near the medium. Such things would not merit notice if they were merely the pride of some tiny rural circle, but even Mr. W. Howitt, whom Mr. Podmore describes as giving "scholarly guidance" to the movement, endorsed the marvels of Willie Turketine. Mr. Edward Childs was another medium who gave great promise for a time, and then disappeared into suspicious obscurity. He was introduced by Mrs. Everitt, and besides direct voice and direct script manifestations like hers, he brought about spirit flute-playing in the dark.

On the other hand, there now appeared some of the mediums who were to take a prominent part in the

strong spiritualist movement of the 'seventies. David Duguid, a painting medium who is still well remembered, began his public career in 1865. It was not until some years later that he professed to pass under the control of certain Dutch painters of long ago, and produce little oil-colour sketches in the dark ; and we will notice this work later. I may, however, note here that, whereas he was understood never to have had a lesson in drawing, I have been informed in Scotland by some who remembered his famous sittings that at an early age he worked with a photographer and artist, and was not unfamiliar with the use of the brush.

More puzzling, and more interesting from the psychological point of view, was the emergence of Miss Nichol in 1866. Under her married name of Mrs. Guppy we shall find this lady in a very prominent position during what we may call the golden age of British Spiritualism. There is a quite natural tendency to suppose that a medium, particularly a lady-medium who derives no income from her gifts, and belongs to a circle of culture and character, could have no incentive to cheat which would be strong enough to overrule her instincts of respectability. Miss Nichol is one of the mediums whom we have to consider carefully in this connection. In 1866 she was companion to Dr. A. R. Wallace's married sister, Mrs. Sims. Wallace was himself at that time beginning his research into Spiritualism, and his sister was a Spiritualist.

When Miss Nichol was in a room objects began to move about in the mysterious manner with which we

have become familiar in studying the early movement in America. Sometimes these strange movements were merely reported by herself, and in the early period they had at least no other witness but Mrs. Sims. It was decided that Miss Nichol was a powerful medium, and sittings were held. Dr. Russel Wallace has described the extraordinary results in his *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* and in chapters xxxv to xxxvii of *My Life*. Miss Nichol soon passed what we may term the apprenticeship stage (answers by means of raps), and began very impressive manifestations. We saw how some years earlier in America the spirits would "apport" a dove for a favoured lady. Miss Nichol "apported" flowers in great abundance. In the darkened room, with locked doors, some movement or touch would be felt, and, when the light was turned up, flowers, still wet with dew, perhaps, would be found on the table or the laps of the sitters. Naturally, the visitors had not presumed to make a preliminary search of the person of Mrs. Sims's great friend. Dr. Wallace tells us of an even more extraordinary manifestation. Miss Nichol, though still tolerably young, was stout and heavy ; yet she was, while sitting in her chair in the dark, lifted on to the table by spirit hands !

As such things as these have entirely disappeared from the program of mediums, even educated Spiritualists are inclined to look upon them with suspicion. The power of the dead is at least not supposed to be less than it was, and there are always good mediums. It is interesting for us to note that it was these mani-

festations, which occur no longer, that made the distinguished converts of the early movement. Miss Nichol and Home converted Dr. Russel Wallace. Home and Florence Cook converted Sir William Crookes. Nearly all the early converts whose names are known were won by men and women who are now regarded with at least grave suspicion. The reader will, however, be better able, if he cares, to form an opinion of Miss Nichol when we consider her remarkable doings as Mrs. Guppy. She married Mr. Guppy, a man of some wealth and many years (seventy-nine years), in 1869, and for a year or two she lived comfortably abroad; which recalls to us Flammarion's caustic remark, in discussing amateur mediums, that he had known "more than one marriage to come of mediumistic powers." Indeed, if it were not malicious, I would suggest that a study of the marriages of prominent lady-mediums would be interesting. Leah Fox married three times; Mrs. Hardinge (or Hardinge-Britten) twice; Miss Nichol twice; and so on.

Home, however, was still the central figure of British Spiritualism—he had no inclination to return to America—and we have to see how the development of his powers contributed to the rapid growth of the movement in the later 'sixties and early 'seventies. His aristocratic wife had died, we saw, in 1862, and his Continental aristocratic friends had not been very sympathetic over his futile attempt to secure her property in 1864. His brief and dazzling career in courts was over. He was, in fact, not prosperous when he returned to London in 1865. He had

dabbled in sculpture in Italy, but buying his productions had rather the air of an act of charity. His friends established a "Spiritual Athenæum" at London, mainly in order to give him the position of paid secretary. But the salary was very modest, and he was tempted into an adventure which would have ruined a less skilful medium.

A Mrs. Lyon, a wealthy but illiterate widow, was advised that Home could put her into communication with her dead husband. He purported to do so, and received a fee of thirty pounds as a subscription to his Athenæum. He remained in close association with Mrs. Lyon, and it was known in the course of 1867 that she had given him very large sums of money, adopted him as her son, and made a will leaving him her entire fortune. Whether she repented, whether relatives moved in the matter, or whether (as she said) a rival medium brought her authentic word from the spirit-world that Daniel was a fraud, we need not linger to determine. It came to a lawsuit, and the ordinary citizen will wisely confess his inability to judge the value of statements which are made in such solemn circumstances. But the issue is so generally misrepresented—even by Mr. Myers, Mr. Podmore, and Home's biographer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*—that a history of the movement would be misleadingly incomplete without a correct statement of it.

Mrs. Lyon sued Home for the return of all the money she had given him. If we choose to believe all her statements on affidavit, which we may justly

decline to do, Home made love to her and tried to marry her. She evaded this, she says, and he then brought her a message from the dead husband, directing her to adopt Daniel as " their " son. Later he brought another message ordering a large cheque for his birthday; and later again the dead man ordered that her will be made in Home's favour. It was, at all events, established in court (April 21 to May 1, 1868) that she gave Home £26,000 on adopting him and £6,798 on his birthday; and she made her will in his favour. Vice-Chancellor Gifford, who took the case, ordered the return of the whole of the money. The common misrepresentation, of which I complain, is that the court acquitted Home of improper conduct. On the contrary, Vice-Chancellor Gifford spoke in scathing terms of Home's conduct. He ruled that the gifts were " fraudulent and void "; and he spoke of Spiritualism as " mischievous nonsense " used for his own purposes by " the needy and the adventurer." He could not have chosen plainer language to express his opinion of Home. It is amazing how the myth of an exoneration of Home has got into English literature.[1]

Home's friends lightly dismissed Mrs. Lyon's statements as untruths, and held that he had had a right to receive her unsolicited gifts. Scorn was poured on her illiterate speech and plain (if not vulgar) manners, and the unsavoury episode was thrust out of sight. It was the more easily forgotten as Home

[1] The entire judgment and all particulars may be read in J. N. Maskelyne's *Modern Spiritualism*.

now displayed a remarkable extension of his powers, and men of considerable distinction examined him and confessed themselves convinced. It was only seven months after the damning indictment in a London court that he produced the most famous of all his manifestations: his supposed floating from one window to another, seventy feet above the street, at Lord Adare's mansion at Westminster.

The details need not again be given at length and examined here.[1] The witnesses were Lord Adare (now Lord Dunraven), Lord Crawford, and Mr. Wynne. Lord Adare wrote an account immediately afterwards, and published it in his *Experiences of Spiritualism with D. D. Home* (pp. 82–3); from which he has taken the account which he published recently in the *Weekly Dispatch* (March 21, 1920). Lord Crawford (or Lord Lindsay) published an account three years later in a pamphlet entitled *Psychic Power*. It is from this pamphlet that Sir W. Barrett quotes; but Lord Crawford had given a materially different account in his evidence before the London Dialectical Society six months after the event, or in July 1869. Mr. Wynne has never said more than that he was prepared to swear that Home *was* wafted from one window to another.

The material point is that, as Lord Dunraven (correcting Sir Arthur Conan Doyle) says in the

[1] The best account and examination is in Mr. Podmore's *Newer Spiritualism* and *Modern Spiritualism* (especially the former). To this I have added a few details, and re-examined the statements, in my little work, *Is Spiritualism Based on Fraud* (pp. 48–52). The account in Sir W. Barrett's *On the Threshold of the Unseen* (1917) is very inaccurate.

Weekly Dispatch, no one claims to have *seen* Home "wafted from one window to another." They sat in a dark room in a state of great nervous excitement. Home had (as he usually did) told them, jauntily, that he was going to be borne from one window to another, and they were naturally concerned. Instead of going to the window, Lord Crawford, to whom Home told what was about to happen, actually sat with his back to the window, some distance from it. He says that he saw Home's shadow on the wall "in a *horizontal* position." Lord Dunraven merely saw Home "standing *upright* outside our window"; and he admits that there was a balcony nineteen inches wide outside. Lord Dunraven adds that he went into the other room with Home, and told him that he could not see how he could have gone out by that window. Home thereupon told him to "stand a little distance off," and swung himself out, rapidly, and in again. "It was so dark," Lord Dunraven says, "that I could not see clearly how he was supported outside."

As I have said of Home's earlier levitations, no one even claims (apart from the extraordinary illusion of Dr. Hallock) to have seen him floating in the air quite detached from any solid support. The evidence is worthless; but the report which was now propagated, of a medium floating in the air eighty-five feet —so Lord Crawford said: it was the third floor, and more probably half that height—above the ground in Victoria Street, attracted sensational interest. Home went on from marvel to marvel. His body

was elongated by the spirits. He took live coals from the fire, and even thrust his hands into the fire.[1] He tilted tables at a steep angle, yet pencils and laths and other small objects which lay on them did not roll off.

We shall meet him again presently under the scientific scrutiny of Professor Crookes, and there is no need to examine here the very defective and scanty evidence for these earlier manifestations. The light was always poor, and is never accurately described. The witnesses are all friends and admirers of Home, without the least doubt of his integrity. But the fresh endorsement of his powers by men of such social or intellectual distinction as Lord Crawford and Lord Adare, Dr. Wallace and Professor Crookes, and the at least respectful attitude of Professor de Morgan, Thackeray, Lord Brougham, and so many others, brought about a new tone in London. It became less fashionable to sneer, more fashionable to reflect gravely that one must keep an open mind. Just at the same time the spiritualist press was reorganised, and from America came news of fresh and wonderful manifestations. These things, and the golden age which followed, we will now proceed to consider.

[1] I have examined these claims in the aforementioned book.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOLDEN AGE IN ENGLAND

THE growth of the English movement in the later 'sixties led to a further development of the spiritualist press. In 1867 Mr. Burns established a paper which he infelicitously called *Human Nature*. In the following year the Rev. Page Hopps, the very liberal and popular Leicester preacher, who had included the new religion amongst his catholic tenets founded an organ with the optimistic title of *Daybreak*. W. H. Harrison, in 1869, entered the field independently with *The Spiritualist*, and a spirited rivalry began. Mr. Burns purchased *Daybreak*, and it entered upon a long and prosperous career, until Burns died in 1895, as *The Medium and Daybreak*. Harrison frequently complains in his columns of the unspiritual tactics of his rival. Large sums of spiritualist money were, he complains, used in underselling and trying to ruin his paper.

The movement had entered upon a period of such rapid growth that journalism had at last become profitable. We saw that, besides an occasional visitor from America, there were now in England native mediums who were regarded as very powerful. Mrs. Guppy, Mrs. Everitt, and Duguid had been

some years in the field. In 1867 Morse—whom the Americans would call a converted bar-tender—and in 1869 Herne became professional mediums. Within the next two years nearly all the prominent mediums of the 'seventies were in the field, and their activity was as extensive as it was peculiar. Home was in the last and most extraordinary phase of his career—he would retire in 1872—and such distinguished converts as Russel Wallace, Varley, Sergeant Cox, and presently Professor Crookes, made a deep impression on the middle class by their assurances.

Wallace belonged to an association of thoughtful men which was then known as the London Dialectical Society, and in 1869 he succeeded in inducing it to form a committee to investigate the claims of Spiritualism. The report of this committee is generally described in recent spiritualist literature as an important triumph of the movement, but it had only a moderate influence at the time. Really critical and competent investigators like Huxley and Lewes declined to join the committee. The conditions which were said to be indispensable for the production of manifestations favoured fraud on the one hand, and were quite inconsistent with genuine scientific investigation on the other. Tyndall, Lewes, and other leading scientific men of the time had attended sittings, and from the start they had been repelled by the triviality of the phenomena where control was possible, and the crude facility where control was impossible. Other scientific men, like Sir Brian Donkin and Sir

E. Ray Lankester at a later date, encountered and proved definite fraud almost at the first sitting. A few, like Professor de Morgan and Sir W. Huggins, persevered with great patience, yet came to no definite result. To all of them it was apparent that Wallace and Crookes, when they published their results, had not at all observed the strict methods of scientific inquiry, and they were therefore no more disposed to repeat the experiments of those observers than they would be to check any other reported discoveries of a startling character if the observation or experiment was clearly faulty.

The attitude of the men of science of the time is so constantly misrepresented that their very dissent from the movement is turned into a triumph for it. "Materialist" prejudice is given as the simple and conclusive explanation of their attitude. There were, in fact, no materialists amongst these Victorian men of science. Huxley, the most violently anti-Spiritualist of them, was a strong opponent of materialism, and rather represented matter as a product of thought (or a tissue of "states of consciousness") than the reverse. He was, like nearly all his eminent colleagues, an agnostic. Even cultivated spiritualist writers like the late Professor Hyslop, to say nothing of popular writers like Sir A. C. Doyle, very gravely mislead their spiritualist readers when they represent the opposing school as "materialism." It is, in nearly every case, agnosticism, which has no *a priori* dogmatic prejudices. But the claims of the Spiritualists in 1870 were so transparently extravagant (as

we shall see), the witnesses were so far from a scientific attitude, and the conditions (darkness, etc.) were so inconsistent with proper control of the phenomena, that numbers of men like Huxley would not enter the field at all. Many of them—Sir W. Huggins, Dr. W. B. Carpenter, G. H. Lewes, Sir D. Brewster, Professor Mivart, Professor Romanes, Professor Sidgwick, etc.—*did* investigate the phenomena at first hand, and were not convinced.[1]

The committee of the Dialectical Society was therefore weakened from the start. Bradlaugh was a member, but he had had no training and was ignorant of science. From its very constitution the committee was biassed in favour of the phenomena, and scientific men took no notice whatever of the report of its months of inquiry. Some authority is occasionally lent to this report by representing it as issued by the Society itself. Professor Lombroso and Sir W. Barrett have said this in their works.[2] On the contrary, the Dialectical Society expressly refused to associate its name with the findings of the committee, and the latter had to print the report on its own responsibility. It need hardly be said that Bradlaugh did not in the least consent to the majority-verdict, but the published report gave so extraordinary a series of assertions on such respectable authority that

[1] Mivart is often quoted as a supporter. He told me himself toward the close of his life that for *thirty* years he had sought, and never found, genuine spiritualist manifestations. He was a very liberal Roman Catholic, and eager to obtain evidence of immortality.

[2] The report was published on July 20, 1870. It is not signed, and is expressly described as issued by the committee, not the Society.

the section of the general public which reads such matters was impressed.

Just at the same period, the beginning of the 'seventies, popular Spiritualism, and indeed the highest Spiritualism of the time, entered upon a new and sensational development which stimulated its progress throughout the world. I have for a few chapters confined myself to England, because progress in America and on the Continent continued slowly on the lines I have indicated. We may, in fact, neglect Continental Spiritualism, which was a feeble echo of British and American Spiritualism, until the last decade of the nineteenth century, when it begins a vigorous original development. In America the movement had, as we saw, languished after 1860. But in the period of recantation, and the dull years that followed, the mediums were slowly elaborating new methods which were to have great influence. This development now claims our attention.

We saw that from a quite early date sitters had been permitted to see "spirit-hands." Most people do not reflect seriously, as a student of science must, on these phenomena. They think that "spirit" can do almost anything, while even a mediaeval philosopher would shrink from the idea that a pure spirit could lift a tambourine, much less a heavy table. In the early days of science we could vaguely attribute such things to "force," and those who admitted the phenomena, yet would not admit Spiritualism, invoked mysterious "odylic" or "ectenic" or "magnetic" forces. There is, in fact, still too wide a tendency to

indulge in this verbiage, and a fairly large school of scientific men in Italy and France attributes the phenomena to " teleplastic " or " telekinetic " forces with which the medium is endowed. As Sir Oliver Lodge has often pointed out, though his own followers have not paid sufficient attention to this, " force " is not a reality at all. It is a certain aspect of material movements, not a substantial cause of them. If material objects are moved, they must be moved by a material object or (as in the case of the magnet or gravitation) by etheric pressure. The general public, which is guided by the need to picture or imagine things, finds this quite natural, and the " spirits " were quite early conceived as making temporary material limbs—or " materialising " limbs, as it came to be called—for touching sitters, writing, or moving objects. Home's sitters often saw ghostly arms; and we remember the dish of solution of phosphorus which Jonathan Koons kept for the spirits to dip their hands in.

Mrs. Underhill (Leah Fox after her third marriage) was the first to develop this manifestation. In 1860 her sitters began to see, dimly, a veiled female figure leave the cabinet and walk about the room. The lights were out, and the figure seemed to be in some sense self-luminous. Naturally, if bereaved Spiritualists could not only receive messages from their dead through a medium, but actually see, if not embrace once more, the form of the dead, this development was more important than any that had yet occurred.

In 1861 a wealthy New York banker named Livermore, who had lost a wife to whom he had been devotedly attached, invited Katie Fox to sit with him for this purpose. One reads with astonishment that she continued to do so for six years, holding more than four hundred sittings, at which Livermore believed that he spoke with and caressed his dead wife as he had done before she "passed over." In the end the popular ghost of Benjamin Franklin and others materialised for him.

Even the reader who follows the history of Spiritualism without prejudice will not omit to notice that Livermore was a wealthy banker, and that in later years Katie Fox confessed that Spiritualism was, as far as she knew it, "humbug from beginning to end." Other mediums found the power of materialising, as one would expect. Robert Dale Owen and other leading Spiritualists were enchanted, and the general public was once more attracted by the novel development. But, as the same scenes were now witnessed on both sides of the Atlantic, we may resume the story in England.

I have described how the endorsement of the phenomena by Professor (later Sir W.) Crookes stimulated the growth of the movement. He began to investigate in 1870, and in the following year he gave an account in the *Quarterly Journal of Science* of certain experiments with Home which seemed to him to prove that there was an abnormal force at work. In order to prevent fraud he prepared a wire cage, something like a waste-paper basket, into which Home

was to lower his accordion when he held it under the table. As the key-end of the instrument hung downward, Crookes thought that he thus prevented Home from touching the keys; but the description of the sounds or music that followed, and of the conditions of light, etc., is so scanty and loose that the experiment may be disregarded. He then devised a variation of the apparatus which we have seen Professor Hare use in the United States. Home was to put his fingers on one end of a long board, and there was a balance at the other end to register any pressure on the board beyond what he might cause with his fingers. The pressure recorded is certainly far beyond what Home could produce by his fingers; but the description is again far from complete and exact, and it does not exclude the supposition that Home, for instance, had something, which he worked with his foot, attached to the other end of the board. Home was daily in and out of Crookes's laboratory, and it appears that he closely watched the development of the tests and was prepared in advance. Crookes admits that many of the tests he proposed were rejected, and those that were accepted were modified.

These weaknesses are easily perceived by the modern reader of Crookes's very meagre accounts (which he never republished), but at the time the mere fact that so able a scientific man—for, though Crookes was still young, he had earned distinction as a chemist—should say that he had scientifically checked Home's claims, and found his powers abnormal, had naturally great weight with the public.

Crookes went on to endorse even more remarkable phenomena. He assures us that Home was elongated and levitated in his presence, and thrust his hands amongst burning coals. As such things have entirely disappeared decades ago from the category of spiritualist claims, we have no need to linger over the faults of the evidence.

Home's work was now accomplished, and his twenty years' wonderful career as a medium comes to a close. In 1872 he again married a woman of means and retired to live on the Continent. His health was said to be bad, and he lived in obscurity, mostly on the Riviera and in Italy, until he died in 1886. But a new generation of mediums was ready to meet the growing interest of the public. Mrs. Guppy (now a young widow with means) returned to the field, as an amateur medium, about the end of 1869. David Duguid, the Scottish cabinet-maker, was claiming to paint pictures under the control of great painters of the old Dutch school. James Morse, the ex-barman, who is described as looking like "a very respectable undertaker's assistant," gave inspirational addresses which drew the enthusiasm of the most cultivated Spiritualists. A Dr. Monck abandoned his position as a clergyman to become a medium. Charles Williams, Herne, and other mediums appeared in London; and Florence Cook was trained in their school in 1872. In the same year Katie Fox came to settle in London, and married a well-known barrister; and Stainton Moses came into prominence.

We shall become more closely acquainted with the characters and performances of these mediums as we proceed. For the moment it is useful to review—and as far as possible I will do so merely historically, without criticism—the extraordinary chronicle of events which we may compile from the spiritualist press of the time. It will be realised that England had at last caught a little of the "Pentecostal fire" which had swept America twenty years earlier.

The new development may be said to begin with the appearance of Herne as a public medium in London in the first month of 1869. He claimed clairvoyance, and saw the spirits and auras which accompanied sitters. In 1871 he entered into partnership, as was often done at that time, with Charles Williams. Mrs. Guppy genially presided at the first sitting at their room in Lamb's Conduit Street, and their proceedings were very attractive. A novelty was the writing of messages in letters of fire in the air; though at a quite early sitting this manifestation nearly led to disaster, for the fiery message was interrupted by a crackle, and a flash of light and a faint smell of phosphorus, which suggested that the "spirits" were using a match that had not been sufficiently damped.

"The damp squib" was, however, redeemed a few months later by an occurrence that dwarfed all the American marvels. Herne and Williams were supposed to be controlled by the spirits of "John King" and his daughter "Katie." The origin of these most familiar of all ghosts in the history of Spiritualism is

rather obscure. One would be inclined to suspect that they were derived from the "King" family of Jonathan Koons's performances in Ohio, and the editor of the *Medium* expressly says this. Apparently Herne began with this idea, but presently he announced that the real name of his "John King" was Sir Henry Morgan, a piratical adventurer of Elizabethan times. His language was certainly Elizabethan in its lack of refinement, though he was so far up to date as to recommend Guinness's stout in the course of his vulgar jovialities. The second medium seems to have taken the part of his daughter, "Katie King," and some spirited dialogues were heard by the astonished sitters. It may seem trivial to dwell on these matters, but the reader must understand that the spiritualist organs of the time fully endorsed the sittings of Herne and Williams; that "Katie King" is the spirit accredited by Crookes himself a year later; and that "John King" is the chief control of Eusapia Palladino, endorsed by most of the scientific Spiritualists of Europe and America. The *début* of these illustrious ghosts is therefore not without interest.

At one sitting in the month of June (1871), when John and Katie were entertaining sitters with their patter, Katie said that she would give a marvellous exhibition of spirit-power by bringing Mrs. Guppy into their midst. The door was closed, and Mrs. Guppy was supposed to be in her house three miles away. But within three minutes Mrs. Guppy was discovered sitting on the table in a state of apparent

consternation, a pen wet with ink in her hand. She explained that she had been snatched by some invisible power from the table at which she was compiling her accounts, wafted through the solid walls and over the houses of London, and deposited where they saw her. I presume that no one to-day, Spiritualist or otherwise, will question that this was a piece of collusive trickery. We must remember that it involves Russel Wallace's favourite amateur medium as well as Herne and Williams and other mediums.

This feat was, as is usual, followed by imitations. Dr. Monck, the ex-preacher, disappeared one night from the bed in which he slept with another man (presumably for economy) in Bristol, and awoke to his surprise in an hotel at Swindon. So his story went, and it was accepted; but we will keep to the main development in London.

Mrs. Guppy continued her favourite manifestation of "apporting" flowers and other objects into the sitting-room. Herne and Williams feebly imitated this, but they had not the ample skirts and the immunity from search of a lady like Mrs. Guppy. She astonished her sitters by producing in their midst live eels and lobsters, and all sorts of unspiritual objects. In January 1872 she announced a new sensation. The news of materialisations in the United States was now pouring into England, and Mrs. Guppy told her clients that she discovered that she had the power. It was considered a poor display. She sat in her cabinet, the moon providing a faint light, and small white faces appeared at an opening

in the upper part of the cabinet. The only sign of life they gave was to nod.

It was obvious that the use of dolls could account for this manifestation, and it caused no enthusiasm. But Herne and Williams now took up the development, and it at once advanced rapidly. John and Katie King "materialised." John was seen quite distinctly by the sitters: a black-bearded, white-draped man, carrying some mysterious lamp which faintly lit his person as he walked about. Amongst the sitters was a sixteen-year-old girl from Hackney, Florence Cook: a pretty, dark girl, of full form, said by some writers of the time to be of a decidedly Jewish appearance. She became a pupil of Herne, and before the end of 1872 she gave sittings at her father's house in Hackney. Florence allowed a lamp in the far corner of the room. At first a face appeared at the cabinet, but presently the fair, white-robed form of Katie King, materialised in full, left the cabinet, and walked about the room. It seems that at first Florence and her father charged for admission. A wealthy Spiritualist of Manchester relieved them of this need by providing a generous annuity, but Florence and her father used still to exact presents of jewellery from people who applied for admission.

It is one of the most famous episodes of the history of Spiritualism that Professor Crookes invited Florence repeatedly to his house or his laboratory, and after examining, measuring, photographing, and even embracing "Katie King," he declared his conviction that she was not Florence Cook. I have in my

earlier book examined the little that Sir William Crookes has ever written on the subject, and need not repeat my criticisms here. He after a time "accidently destroyed" all his photographs and plates, and he forbade friends to reproduce the copies he had given them.[1] Measurements of height are irrelevant, for Florence Cook and others were observed to walk at times on tip-toe. Florence refused to let Crookes weigh her (as "Katie King"); and he never saw ghost and medium simultaneously until he agreed to let her work in a room chosen by herself in her father's house. She plainly had a confederate on that occasion.

Professor Crookes's chivalrous defence of Florence Cook (in the *Spiritualist*, February 6, April 3, and June 5, 1874) was elicited by a very damaging charge which was brought against her at the time by a London Spiritualist, Mr. Volckmann. He was a friend of Mrs. Guppy, whom he presently married; and that lady seems to have been jealous of Florence. Volckmann told in the London press how he only obtained permission to attend Florence's sittings by making a present of jewellery, and how on December 9, 1873, he noticed that "Katie King" was walking on tip-toe. He seized her by the waist and the hand, but

[1] J. H. Simpson says, in his *Twenty-Two Different Photos of the Katie King Series* (1903), that Crookes gave him these and forbade him to reproduce them. Kiesewetter, however, has three or four reproductions of them in his *Geschichte des neueren Occultismus* (1891), and Lehmann has, in his *Aberglaube und Zauberei* (1908), a similar photo taken by Aksakoff. Any person who cares to examine these will see that Mr. Simpson's description is unreliable. They represent a plump young lady of Judaic aspect, her hair carefully concealed by muslin.

the other Spiritualists present fell upon him and assisted Florence to escape. We shall see later that she was similarly caught in 1880.

In the controversy which agitated the Spiritualist world Crookes wrote the three meagre letters to which I have referred. These letters and Crookes's articles in the *Quarterly* were published in a ten-page pamphlet, *Researches into the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, in 1874. It is not clear that Crookes published them, though his permission must have been asked. He never afterwards published anything on the subject, and the letters are now as rare as they are interesting. Contrary to the general belief, Crookes was not convinced by these experiences of the truth of Spiritualism, which he did not embrace until near the close of his life. On August 1, 1874, he wrote to a Russian lady that after four years of investigation, including months of experience with Home, Katie Fox, and Florence Cook, he had found "no satisfactory proof that the dead can return and communicate." A copy of this letter was sent by Aksakoff to *Light*, and was published in that journal on May 12, 1900. Sir W. Crookes did not dissent.

Meantime an amateur medium, Miss Showers, had come to London from Teignmouth, and was exhibiting materialisations in the West End of London. She was the daughter of General Showers, and was therefore taken on trust. Her story is, however, one of those painful episodes of the movement which are not open to two interpretations. Valuable presents were made by wealthy men of the West End to "Lenore

Fitzwarren," her aristocratic ghost, but she was detected after a time. Sergeant Cox, a well-known lawyer of the time who lent his name to the movement, invited Miss Showers to his country house in April 1874, and his daughter attempted to peep into the cabinet while the ghost stood at the opening of it. She saw that the medium was not in her chair, and a scuffle followed, which made it plain to all that "Lenore" was Miss Showers. It was politely explained that she had unconsciously, in the trance-state, impersonated a spirit, and for a time she continued her work; but the exposure was too much for her, and she soon disappeared.

Here, however, we approach the period of reaction and "recantation," which we may reserve for the next chapter. By the beginning of 1874 London had a large and enthusiastic body of Spiritualists, and there was a proportionate movement in the provinces. That year saw the foundation of the British National Association of Spiritualists, which included the Countess of Caithness and Florence Marryatt, the distinguished novelist, amongst its Vice-Presidents. In the following year, the more cultivated Spiritualists, such as Sergeant Cox and Stainton Moses, founded the short-lived Psychological Society. But even the better educated Spiritualists accepted extraordinary claims. They looked with suspicion on the popular materialisations, and they ignored the fantastic stories of Herne and Dr. Monck. Yet, as we saw, Dr. Russel Wallace regarded Mrs. Guppy as a thoroughly genuine medium; Mr.

Cromwell Varley joined with Professor Crookes in endorsing Florence Cook and Mrs. Fay; Sergeant Cox thought the trance-mediumship of Morse beyond human power; and practically all accepted the miracles of Home and the almost equally startling performances of Stainton Moses. The wave was at its height, and was about to subside.

CHAPTER IX

THE REACTION IN ENGLAND

A FEW further instances must be given of the credulous temper which had been created even in London before we consider the series of heavy blows which shattered the movement. Very typical is the story of Mrs. Jencken's baby, which was widely accepted. Katie Fox had, as I said, married Jencken, a London barrister, in 1872. A son was born in 1873, and marvels were expected of an issue from so gifted a family. In the course of 1874 and 1875 the columns of the *Spiritualist* solemnly recorded these expected wonders as they occurred. At the age of five months, the baby seized a pencil and wrote a long and edifying message in a clear script. The *Medium and Daybreak* published a facsimile of this supernatural message. When one reads the account of the original witness carefully, one realises that, as usual, no one saw the message being written. The visitor who gives an ecstatic account of the event merely testifies that he saw a pencil in the baby's fingers and the written message beside it. As Mrs. Jencken snatched the pencil in alarm from the child, and the nurse gave notice on the spot that she must leave so uncanny a house, it was taken for granted that they had nothing to do with the message.

Throughout 1875 the progress of the marvellous baby continued to be reported. Messages came through that the child was to become "the wonder of the world." Spirits would often lift up "his little foot," and rap out answers to questions. At times "his luminous eyes" would "brighten into quite a lustre of soft light," and he would "stretch out his hands to catch his playmates, the unseen, whom he greets with smiles and caresses." These things were taken quite seriously in the years 1874 and 1875. It is not necessary to add that the child does not in the end make even a modest appearance in the annals of Spiritualism. Before it was fifteen years old, its mother had denounced Spiritualism as "all humbuggery."

The record of Stainton Moses, whom hardly any Spiritualist yet has had the courage to disavow, also falls in this period. Even Mr. Podmore, to whose chapter on Stainton Moses in his *Modern Spiritualism* I must refer the reader for a full account, is restrained by the extreme piety of his utterances and the very high esteem of his friends, and declines to pronounce on his character. This is not the place for such pronouncement, but the reader must understand that the Rev. Stainton Moses (or "M.A., Oxon," as he was widely known, from his pen-name) claimed far more than the power of spirit-writing and clairvoyance. He was levitated. He caused spirit-lights very frequently; and was twice found to have phosphorus. His sitters were sprayed with scent, and heard mysterious music. He "apported" a great variety

of objects; and the things in his bedroom were, he stated, arranged by spirit-hands in the form of a cross. No one doubted in the least the character of Stainton Moses, and these phenomena, though always performed before a small and select circle of friends, were accepted as genuine, and greatly fostered the movement from 1872 onward.

In more popular circles, Dr. Monck, the ex-Unitarian minister, did deeds of the heroic age. We remember how he was transferred from Bristol to Swindon in 1871. This was soberly claimed in the *Spiritualist* in 1875. In the same year, the *Medium and Daybreak* gave an account of a banquet in the Isle of Wight, at which Dr. Monck's spirit-control gave a remarkable exhibition. His chief control was Samuel, "formerly a shipwright in Portsmouth dockyard," now a very jovial and frolicsome spirit who delighted the faithful by his pranks. He would often lift the rather ponderous Dr. Monck on to the shoulders of sitters in the dark. The editor of the *Medium and Daybreak*, Burns, records that Samuel one night lifted Monck on to his shoulders, and then called for a light that they might "see a parson ride on Jamie Burns's shoulders."[1] At the banquet in the Isle of Wight, "Samuel" became very freakish. No one could drink his wine, because "Samuel" pushed or snatched the glass from his lips. Some of the glasses were turned upside down on the table. The conditions (light, sobriety, etc.) are not given.

Another phase of the movement was illustrated

[1] *Medium and Daybreak*, March 12, 1875.

by Morse, Mrs. Hardinge, and Mrs. Cora Tappan, who gave wonderful addresses and answers to questions under spirit-influence. Mr. Podmore describes Morse as "one of those who had as little to do with the trickery of the séance-room as any modern University Extension Lecturer." Those who care to read his full record may demur to this description, in the interest of our University Extension Lecturers. Morse claimed that he was at times elongated, and he often caused the "apport" of flowers, ferns, fruit, and pigeons. These are amongst the notorious tricks of the séance-room. Morse also excites suspicion by the ingenious variety of his "controls." They were, chiefly, a strolling player, a navvy, an aged carter (still aged and rheumaticky in the spirit-world), and a Chinese mandarin.

Of Mrs. Hardinge's eloquence in her normal condition we have seen so many specimens that we can well believe that she was an impressive trance-medium. Mrs. Cora Tappan, an American trance-medium who had appeared in 1860, and visited England in 1873, was more gifted. Her fluency was such that she gave three thousand discourses in fifteen years, though she began in her early teens. She allowed sitters to ask her questions on all sorts of subjects, and her skill in making some sort of reply where the subject was unknown to her was remarkable.

Mrs. Annie Eva Fay was another American medium who arrived in 1874 to fan the flames of British faith. She and her husband—who, of course, rejoiced in the title of "Colonel"—took the Hanover Square Rooms,

and exhibited the most recent American development to admiring crowds. Mrs. Fay's hands were tied behind her to a post with cotton bandages, and the knots were sewn. The lights were lowered, and the familiar tambourine played, hats were transferred from her lap to her head, and a glass of water was emptied. Mr. Maskelyne claimed that he could reproduce her phenomena, which were merely variations of those of the Davenport brothers. Professor Crookes and Mr. Cromwell Varley, the electrician, then placed her (as they had done Florence Cook) in an electric circuit, with a galvanometer which ought to register any movement on her part in the dark. We know to-day various ways in which she might defeat this control, but the general public was greatly impressed to learn that she had successfully passed examination by a distinguished man of science and a practical electrician of high repute in his trade.

Mr. Maskelyne had, however, now mastered her tricks so completely that she confessed to him and offered to perform under his management. This was in 1875, and it was one of a long series of exposures which were now to extinguish the inflated hopes of the movement for several decades. Many quite dispassionate persons regret that a history of Spiritualism is so apt to be a calendar of exposures of fraudulent mediums. There comes a stage, however, when the prosperity of the movement leads inevitably to the rise of adventurers, and a period of detections infallibly follows. In this case a brief but complete statement of the exposures which decimated British Spiritualism

after 1873 is essential to the understanding of the events which we have narrated. Almost every single medium we have named was detected in fraud between 1874 and 1884. Few will fail to see that to describe their performances without mentioning this sequel would not be to write history ; but I will devote to this decade of exposures only a fraction of the space I have devoted to the constructive narrative.

Herne and Williams, who had been consistently supported by the two spiritualist organs, as well as by Mrs. Guppy and her friends, were the first to suffer. They were due to perform at Hull, but Herne was found to be intoxicated when the hour arrived, and a painful scandal followed. Herne cynically exposed his own trickery (*Medium and Daybreak*, April 4, 1873), and Williams entered into a new partnership with Rita ; the unhappy issue of which we shall see later. Herne himself was reconciled with the editor of the *Medium and Daybreak*, Burns, and continued as a medium under his auspices. We shall meet him again presently.

In the same year, 1873, news came of a painful imposture in the United States. The popular ghost of " Katie King " appeared also in America, through the mediumship of an illiterate couple named Holmes, and Robert Dale Owen, son of the great reformer and himself of some distinction in American life, had developed a peculiar affection for this young " spirit." He adopted her as his daughter, and made her many presents of jewellery, which she was supposed to take to and wear in spirit-land. Owen was now seventy-

four years old, and had been a devoted Spiritualist for nearly twenty years. One day a spiritualist colleague came to him with plain documentary evidence that the Holmeses had employed a young girl to impersonate the ghost.

There were sceptics, as "Katie" (who was now supposed to have been born in London in 1660) talked in sound Philadelphian American instead of seventeenth-century English. To such details Owen and others, who loaded the handsome spirit with presents and even wrote poems on her, were blind. But a man who one night noticed that Katie King had singularly foul breath for a spirit—lady-spirits approached sitters very closely in those days—became a detective. He discovered that a pretty young widow named White used to go to the Holmeses' house, disguised as a man, before each sitting, and he obtained certain letters that had passed between them. Robert Dale Owen was compelled to admit the fraud. He died, in a pitiful mental condition, shortly afterwards, and a shadow was cast on the whole movement in America.

This grave news reached England soon after the scandal at Hull, and it was followed in December by Volckmann's detection of Florrie Cook, which we have seen. The grave agitation which this caused had not yet subsided when Miss Showers was exposed in the home of so unassailable a witness as Sergeant Cox. This was in April 1874. In the summer of the same year another scandal occurred at London. With the development of photography it was inevitable that it should be used by mediums, and as early as 1863 we

find Mumler, of Boston, producing spirit-photographs. Every photographer knew how easy it was to produce such things by double exposure of the plates, and Mumler's repeated efforts were constantly exposed. In spite of this, Mrs. Guppy introduced a spirit-photographer, named Hudson, in 1872, and he had a brisk trade. Harrison, the editor of the *Spiritualist*, was himself a photographer, and he came to the conclusion, and at last announced it in his paper, that Hudson's photographs were fraudulent.

Hudson was driven out of the field in the summer of 1874, but the year was not to close without a third grave scandal. Mediums then often worked in pairs, and one couple, Bastian and Taylor, were so esteemed that in December 1874 the Dutch Spiritualists invited them over. Some suspicion had already been aroused, as a lady at one of their sittings (in the dark) earlier in the year had seized a spirit-hand and found that it was Bastian's. The little accident had been adjusted by the verbal explanations which were, unfortunately, becoming common, but some of the Dutch Spiritualists were not satisfied. While Bastian and Taylor were giving a musical sitting in the dark at Arnheim, some inflammable material was fired by electricity, and the sitters had a momentary view of Bastian flourishing a guitar in the air above their heads. Sound Spiritualists held that what was seen was a spirit-arm rapidly dematerialising, but many wondered.

In the course of 1875 Mrs. Eva Fay came to London, and was, to the satisfaction of most people, convicted of fraud. This was, however, a matter of theory.

Far worse was the exposure of the new spirit-photographer Buguet. Since 1873 this French photographer had been one of the most famous mediums in Europe. Thousands of people had sat to him (at twenty francs a sitting) and received imprints of ghosts on their photographs, and in hundreds of cases they were prepared to swear to the identity of the ghostly forms, in which they recognised dead relatives. Buguet had had a busy season at London in 1874, and had won an easy triumph. In June 1875 the Parisian police arrested him, and searched his premises. They found such apparatus that Buguet, trusting to receive a lighter sentence, confessed. In the early period his assistants had sat for the " ghost " on prepared plates, or had crept behind sitters for half the exposure. In 1874 and 1875 he had dispensed with these costly confederates and used a doll, or lay figure, with various loose heads. Probably one of the discharged confederates had given information to the police. Buguet and an assistant were condemned to a year in prison.

One of the most painful features of the case was that scores of French Spiritualists swore in the witness-box that they recognised the spirits on their photographs as dead relatives. They were confronted with Buguet's confession and with the doll which had served every purpose by changing the head for each sitter.

Buguet's clerk had pleasantly extracted a few details from applicants about the relative they hoped to find on the plate, and he had roughly dressed his

doll on this information. This exposure of the complete unreliability of Spiritualists' assurances was very unpleasant, and the leading Spiritualists of London refused to accept the verdict. Stainton Moses had endorsed both Hudson and Buguet, and he was supposed to be in almost hourly communication with spirits. He and Howitt and others started the theory that the whole thing was a wicked plot of the French clergy, and it was widely accepted. But the exposure was so deadly that there has been very little spirit-photography in England since 1875 until more subtle American methods were introduced in recent years.

The echoes of this famous trial were still rumbling through the spiritualist world when, in November, another castastrophe occurred at Liverpool, where the Davenport Brothers had been checked in 1864. A medium named Egerton was supposed to be sitting in his cabinet while the usual " beautiful female figure " walked about the space in front. The Vice-President of the Liverpool Psychological Society seized the ghost and called for a light, when the ghostly lady was seen to be the man Egerton, wearing a mask and the customary abundance of muslin. Burns, editor of the *Medium and Daybreak*, had the unhappy idea of sending Herne to redeem this scandal, and Herne was over-bold. First the ghost of Harriet Lane (recently murdered and very notorious) walked the stage. Next there appeared a baby—a dummy—which a spiritualist mother in the audience recognised as her darling child. Then John King came on; and at

that moment two sceptics released their dark lanterns and revealed Herne in disguise.[1] Herne returned to London with such a story that Mr. Burns opened a subscription-list in his paper for the prosecution of the exposers! We may gather the growing weariness of the movement from the fact that he received only £15, which he handed to Herne.

In 1876 a famous American medium came over to restore the drooping prestige of the movement. "Dr." Henry Slade was one of the tall, thin, solemn, dreamy-looking American mediums whose personal appearance won confidence. Since the later 'sixties he had earned a great reputation for receiving written messages on slates and giving answers to questions written on paper and rolled into little pellets. As early as 1872 an American named Truesdell had, in private, so cleverly convicted him of fraud that Slade had genially confessed, but Truesdell did not make public his rare collection of experiences (*Bottom Facts Concerning the Science of Spiritualism*) until 1883. Slade came to London with a great repute; and within a few weeks he was in the hands of the London police. Professor (now Sir) E. Ray Lankester and Dr. (Sir) Bryan Donkin were two of the scientific men who were constantly rebuked for refusing to investigate, and they went to sit with Slade. Sir E. Ray Lankester snatched the slate before the message was supposed to be written, and, as he expected, found the writing already there. They prosecuted Slade, who had

[1] Both exposures were fully reported in the Liverpool *Daily Courier*, November 26 and December 25, 1875.

charged a guinea a sitter, and he received a sentence of three months with hard labour. There had, however, been a technical flaw in the wording of the indictment. The sentence was quashed, and before a second prosecution could begin Slade escaped to the Continent.

The year 1876 brought also the partial exposure of another very popular medium, Eglinton. The favourite feature of his sittings was the appearance of a materialised Arab, "Abdullah," whose flowing beard and draperies were very familiar to English Spiritualists. Sitters were permitted to snip off fragments of Abdullah's beard and mantle, and a few days later Archdeacon Colley, who suspected him, found in Eglinton's trunk a false beard and a quantity of muslin to which the detached relics perfectly corresponded. Eglinton survived the ordeal, and continued for many years, until he was again exposed, to be one of the most popular mediums in England.

The following year brought varied fortune to the labouring movement. In America it was rent by the schism of Mme. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott founding the Theosophical Society at New York. On the Continent it received a splendid stimulus from the work of Slade. An elderly and purblind professor of Leipsic University, Zöllner, invited Slade to his house, and devised a number of ingenious tests for him. Slade passed all these tests to the satisfaction of Zöllner and two other professors—a fourth remained sceptical—who studied him. Zöllner, who refused to believe in spirits and cannot properly be

called a Spiritualist, put out a theory that there were invisible intelligent beings living on a fourth dimension of space. Scarcely anybody followed him in his theory, while his endorsement of the facts gave great joy to the spiritualist world. It was held that Slade was completely rehabilitated, and the adhesion of another distinguished scientific man was considered a great triumph; especially as the celebrated conjuror Bellachini supported Zöllner. Professor Zöllner's account of his experiences (in English entitled *Transcendental Physics*) is, in fact, very impressive to the inexpert. I have myself known materialists to be severely shaken by reading it.[1]

But in England the news of the triumph of Slade was offset by two further grave scandals. The jovial "Dr." Monck came to the inevitable end in February (1877). He had been drawn into the fatal field of materialisations, which the spiritualist public eagerly sought, and at last masks, gloves, muslin, and a jointed rod were found in his secret possession (*Spiritualist*, February 9, 1877). It was the beginning of the end of Monck's long and prosperous career. Many still believed in him, and even Archdeacon Colley wrote months afterwards that he had seen spirit-forms of "great beauty" issue from Monck's

[1] Those who desire an analysis of Slade's performances at Leipsic should read the relevant chapter in Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, or Mr. Hereward Carrington's *Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism*. The control was quite inadequate. Zöllner, who died soon afterwards, was mentally decaying. Professor Weber was seventy-four years old, and Professor Fechner was nearly blind. We shall see that Slade was several times exposed afterwards, and he died in drink and misery.

body and merge into it once more. Others were becoming very sceptical about all materialisations. In the same year, 1877, Miss Wood, a very popular medium in the north, was detected at Blackburn. The ghost was seized, and it was found to be Miss Wood. Her explanation, that evil powers had constrained her to impersonate the ghost while she lay unconscious in her trance, was accepted, and she continued until her next and final exposure.

Many ingenious theories were advanced by the spiritualist organs in order to prevent the complete disruption of the movement by these scandals. It was generally held that the medium had acted unconsciously, in a state of trance. Sometimes it was said that evil spirits, anxious to defeat the new religion, had possessed the unconscious medium and caused the impersonation. Others suggested that the hypnotic influence of sceptics in the circle may have automatically caused it. There was a cry for the exclusion of sceptics; and at all events more stringent promises were exacted from sitters that they would not break the circle of hands, show a light, or touch the ghost or medium. A very useful conviction that the medium's life depended on the observance of these conditions was now thoroughly imposed upon the spiritualist world.

But the exposures continued. We saw how Charles Williams had dissolved partnership with Herne after his first scandal, and joined Rita. It was now the turn of this pair. They had been invited to Holland, where the movement was making progress,

and were holding a sitting at Amsterdam in 1878. A popular ghost named "Charlie" was walking about the room, when "it" was seized by one of the sitters, and was found to be Rita. The indignant Dutch searched the two mediums. Rita had a false beard, six handkerchiefs, and a bottle of phosphorised oil (used by ghosts as a lamp when they walked). Williams had the complete outfit of the boisterous pirate "John King": a dirty black beard, several yards of well-used muslin, and bottles of scent and phosphorised oil. The childish explanation that the spirits had omitted to "dematerialise" these things was actually accepted by numbers of Spiritualists, but for the general public the exposure was another deadly blow at Spiritualism.

In 1879 there was no important scandal, though there was, as we shall see, a quarrel within the English movement which was nearly as injurious. But it must be understood that I am only recording the exposures of prominent mediums. Little local scandals were constantly occurring. Men like Mr. Stuart Cumberland in England and Mr. Truesdell in America were hunting down fraud very industriously. Materialising mediums were their special prey, for no case was known in which a ghost had been seized and had not proved to be the medium. As the spiritualist sitters now formed a kind of bodyguard for the protection of the medium, other tactics were used. Ink or cochineal was squirted on the ghost, and found on the medium. Tin-tacks were strewn in the ghost's path, and language not of a superhuman character

was heard. But we can deal here only with exposures which had wide publicity and real influence.

The year 1880 brought three new and very important scandals. One was the second and definitive conviction of Miss Wood. While she was supposed to be entranced in her cabinet, a " little Indian girl " walked the room, and was described in the customary ecstatic language. A sitter, at Newcastle, seized the ghost, and found that it was Miss Wood, swathed in muslin, walking on her knees round the room. One important effect of such exposures was, as I said, to show how the quite honest declarations of spiritualist sitters might be leagues from the truth. The conditions were so bad and the state of expectation so intense that spiritualist audiences had for years persuaded themselves that the face of Miss Wood, who was of a certain age, was the face of a beautiful young Indian girl.

Florence Cook, or Mrs. Corner as she now was, fell next. " Katie King " having gone back to spirit-land, after a pathetic farewell in the presence of Professor Crookes, a ghost named " Marie " had taken her place at Mrs. Corner's sittings. At one sitting in London there were two undergraduates from Oxford, Sir George Sitwell and Baron von Buch. The impersonation was palpable, and they did not scruple to lay hands on the ghost. Florence was now unmistakably caught masquerading as a ghost, but the theory of unconscious action was successfully advanced for her, and she continued until the year 1899 to shine amongst the British mediums. As the reader may

be eager to learn her end, we may anticipate. In 1899 she was invited by the leading Polish Spiritualist, Professor Ochorowicz, to Poland. Lehmann tells us in his *Aberglaube und Zauberei* (p. 332) that she was now in so decayed a condition that the Poles declared her sittings " a wretched and badly rehearsed comedy," and sent her home to end her days in obscurity. She was exposed, in all, four times, yet lived for nearly thirty years on the movement.

The third scandal of the year 1880 was the worst. Ever since 1875 an amateur medium, named Mme. d'Espérance, had fascinated the Spiritualists of England. She seemed refined, though poorly educated, and for a long time she had a high reputation as a trance-medium. In the spiritualist press there circulated a story that a learned geologist had put to her a series of scientific questions which she had answered with supernormal accuracy. Mr. Podmore, with his usual thoroughness, shows that the various versions of these answers prove that we have not the original text, and the specimens he gives are in many cases quite wrong and in others merely an adroit manipulation of scraps of scientific reading. After a time she lost her husband, and she became a medium for materialisation. Her chief ghost was an Arab-maid—" beautiful," of course—named Yolande (which is not very Semitic), apparently about sixteen years old. At times Yolande " apported " with her beautiful exotic flowers. She was the most esteemed and attractive of all the ghosts in the contemporary Pantheon, and no Spiritualist dreamed of questioning

the good faith of the pretty and refined young widow, Mme. d'Espérance. She was the last anchor of the belief in materialisations.

At a sitting in 1880 somebody seized "Yolande," and, as usual, found that he held the medium. This was a peculiarly painful scandal, as Mme. d'Espérance had been thrust upon the critical world as beyond the faintest suspicion of cheating. Indeed, she now treated the suggestion of fraud as one utterly unthinkable by any decent person, and Spiritualists generally believed her. It is amusing to read in the gushing autobiography, *Shadow-Land* (1897), how she treats this awkward episode. She disdains to argue about it. She has not the slightest idea what happened. From her trance she awoke violently to find herself in the rude grasp of a man, and she was so ill that she had to retire from her work for years. The reader is left to form his own theory of the way in which the painful experience befell her. At all events, she retired from the field for ten years, and we shall meet her again when the partial revival of the movement in the 'nineties encourages the mediums.

Before the end of the same year, 1880, Eglinton was again exposed. In the following year Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher, two very popular mediums, were detected. In 1882 the news came from America of a fresh exposure of Slade; and the English public was confirmed in its growing derision by the publication of an anonymous work, *Confessions of a Medium*, which laid bare a great deal of the

machinery of "manifestations." In 1884 Bastian came to an end in circumstances so romantic and respectable that the attention of the whole of Europe was drawn to his exposure. He was giving private sittings in the palace of an Austrian Archduke, and the Prince and his companion concluded that he was a fraud. Fortunately, he was using as a cabinet a little room off the sitting-room, and they so arranged the door of this that it could be closed when the "ghost" came out. Bastian, dressed as the ghost, heard the door click behind him, and the game was up. The Archduke and his companion wrote a work in which they let the whole Austrian and German world known their thorough exposure of one of the oldest of the mediums, and the press of the world eagerly reproduced it.

Thus in ten years nearly every English and American medium of any repute was convicted of fraud. There were scores of minor exposures, but it is enough to record those which were generally known and made a deep impression. Herne, Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, Bastian, Taylor, Mrs. Fay, Buguet, Egerton, Slade, Eglinton, Monck, Rita, Miss Wood, Florence Cook, Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher, and Mme. d'Espérance, were the élite of the mediumistic world. With their names the spiritualist press had been filled for more than a decade. Each was pronounced thoroughly "safe." Each was a fraud. The general public did not believe in "trances" and "unconscious" impersonations. The whole movement was condemned. Only a very few well-known mediums escaped detec-

tion, and this was generally because, as in the case of Stainton Moses, they gave no opportunity to the general public to observe them ; or because, like Mrs. Hardinge and Mrs. Tappan, they confined themselves to speeches in which it was difficult to tell the normal limits of a woman's volubility. The British "recantation-period" was full on. And upon the depressed and anxious faithful there came, in 1888, the terrible confession of the Fox sisters which we noticed in the second chapter.

CHAPTER X

A DECADE OF DEPRESSION

In the year 1887 an Italian writer, A. Faresi, published a work with the title *Lo spiritismo è morto e sepolto* ("Spiritualism is dead and buried"). A similar work would have been regarded as not unjustified in every country in the world. The appalling series of exposures from all quarters of the globe—Munich and Vienna, Leipsic and Amsterdam, London and New York—gave a deathly chill to the earnest propagandist efforts which the triumph of the 'seventies had called forth on all sides. In France and Italy no great mediums had arisen, and the exposure of Buguet still depressed the faithful. In Germany the efforts of the Russian Aksakoff, who had founded a "Library of Spiritualism" (translations of English and American works) in 1868, and the journal *Psychische Studien* in 1874, had for a time had some success. Professor Fichte, son of the distinguished philosopher, and one or two other notable men had joined. Zöllner's account of his experiments with Slade (in his *Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen*, 1878–80) had further assisted. But this was offset by the Austrian Archduke's exposure of Bastian (*Einblicke in den Spiritualismus*, 1884), and

by fresh news about Slade, and even about Zöllner, from America, which we shall see presently. The movement drooped again.

In Holland and other European countries, which received their spiritualist vitality from England, the exposures were keenly felt. In the United States there had been, as we saw, a series of exposures corresponding to those in England, and in 1884 these were crowned by an investigation which completed the temporary rout of the mediums. A Spiritualist named Henry Seybert had left to the University of Pennsylvania a sum of money to found a chair of philosophy, on condition that the University made a thorough investigation of Spiritualism and published its results. A commission of professors was appointed, and the mediums of America were invited to attend and prove their powers. Private mediums ignored the invitation, and the professional mediums showed no eagerness to assist "scientific investigation." Some demanded large fees; others impossible conditions. But the professors thoroughly examined such mediums as they could induce to perform in their presence. Slade, Keeler, Mrs. Fox-Kane, and other leading mediums were thus examined. Professor Fullerton was sent to Leipsic to study the famous experiments with Zöllner.

The report, which was issued in 1887, checked for a time the demand of the Spiritualists that "orthodox scientists" ought to study their phenomena. It consisted of 159 pages of exposure of fraud. Every single variety of manifestation was examined, and the

method of doing it explained. Slade and Keeler, two of the most famous mediums, were declared to be arrant impostors, and the professors concluded that there was not a genuine abnormal phenomenon in the whole American movement. This fully confirmed what Truesdell has said about Slade, Foster, and other mediums in his *Bottom Facts Concerning Spiritualism* a few years before, and the firmament of the spiritualist world was heavily clouded once more.

In England the discomfiture of popular Spiritualism led to some reorganisation and to the appearance of the more refined section which shelters under the Society for Psychical Research. In 1878 a monthly had appeared with the title *Spiritual Notes*, and in the following year, when Harrison and his followers had some quarrel with Stainton Moses, this monthly became the official organ of the British National Association of Spiritualists. In 1881 both the *Spiritualist* and *Spiritual Notes* passed away, and *Light*, which is still the organ of the movement, came into existence. Mr. Burns's paper, it may be added, lingered on until its editor's death in 1895.

In 1882 the more cultivated Spiritualists, headed by Professor (now Sir W.) Barrett, founded the Society for Psychical Research. In face of the constant exposures of popular mediums and physical manifestations, few men of cultural distinction now cared to be openly associated with Spiritualism, or indeed failed to see that at least an immense amount of fraud was mixed up with it. But there were many who felt that there was something abnormal in many of the

phenomena brought under the heading of Spiritualism, and, as psychologists proper would not investigate them, they decided to form an association, distinct from Spiritualism, to study any occurrence which seemed abnormal.

Professor Hyslop says that the most active spirits in this enterprise—Professor Barrett, Professor Sidgwick, Myers, Gurney, and Podmore—were especially concerned about the powers of Stainton Moses. It must now be very difficult for any person who is not a thorough Spiritualist to regard Stainton Moses as other than a deliberate impostor. He performed as pronounced and extraordinary physical phenomena as the greater part of the popular mediums. His "apports" alone, which were very numerous, offer us the plain alternative of downright Spiritualism or deliberate cheating. Mr. Podmore very weakly suggests an abnormality of character, which we can only regard as akin to kleptomania, yet is more difficult to conceive psychologically. That Stainton Moses believed himself under spirit-control when he wrote the hundreds of pages of dreamy (and often inaccurate) matter which he published one might admit; but that any abnormality of character explains how a highly educated man could produce books and artistic objects from an invisible source as he sat with his friends, and say that they were brought by spirits, most people will decline to believe.

Moses was, however, a personal friend of Mr. Myers and Professor Sidgwick and other distinguished Cambridge men, and we can understand the pain with

which they would shrink from any suggestion of fraud on his part. There were, moreover, large numbers of other phenomena, apart from the crude table-rapping and slate-writing and ghost-producing which fascinated the general public. Claims of haunted houses had never been systematically investigated; and it may almost be said that the Society drove the common ghost-story out of the field it had so long occupied in England. Telepathy, or thought-reading, seemed to them another plausible claim which required study and experiment. Apparitions (whether subjective or objective), clairvoyance, hypnotism, automatic writing, etc., were said to await impartial investigation. The Society was founded, with Professor Sidgwick as President, and with Mr. A. Balfour, Mr. Richard Hutton, and other distinguished men on its lists. Its object was inquiry, not proof of a theory. It is not, and never was, a spiritualist organisation.

The American Society for Psychical Research was instituted in 1884, on the model of the English. Its impartiality was even more conspicuous than that of the English Society. Professor Simon Newcomb, an agnostic, was its first President; and Professor G. Stanley Hall (who has recently attacked Spiritualism and Sir Oliver Lodge in very contemptuous terms), Professor Fullerton (who exposed the Slade-Zöllner fiasco), Professor Pickering, and other decided non-Spiritualists were Vice-Presidents. Much of the work of the American Society will enter our narrative later. It is enough here to say that from 1887 to 1905 its secretary and active spirit was

Dr. Richard Hodgson, a stern critic of physical mediums, but not equally drastic as to trance-mediums and telepathists; and that from 1905 to 1920 (when he in turn died) Professor Hyslop was secretary.

Myers, Gurney, and Podmore, the three great early workers of the Society, were so industrious that within a few years they had collected the mass of anecdotes about apparitions which they have published in their *Phantasms of the Dead* and *Phantasms of the Living*. They rather damaged their authority at the outset by publishing in the *Nineteenth Century* (July 1884) a circumstantial story of an apparition, apparently on authority of the highest order, which turned out to be totally untrue (*Nineteenth Century*, November 1884); and probably hardly any person now ever glances at their laboriously compiled volumes. The only interest which members of the Society find to-day in such "ghost-stories" is whether they do or do not prove telepathy; and the question of telepathy is now, as we shall see, investigated by other methods.

There is no doubt that men like Barrett and Myers and Lodge anticipated that the new movement would select the grains of gold from the rubbish-heap that was accumulating, and would furnish proofs of spirit-intercourse that would meet the scrutiny of science. In this they cannot have regarded it as successful, for Sidgwick, Gurney, Podmore, and other prominent members died without reaching any firm conviction of the reality of life after death, and the movement is still in the mood of inquiry. From the first, however,

its members, especially Podmore and Hodgson, rendered considerable service in checking the extravagances of popular Spiritualism.

Podmore gives us a sample of the work which he did in this direction, a year after the formation of the Society. In 1883 *Light* announced another of those domestic eruptions which had occurred periodically since the birth of the movement at Hydesville in 1848. The house of a London Spiritualist, Mr. Theobald, was chosen for this visitation; and the spirits again had the questionable taste to choose the member of the establishment with the least obviously good character. The cook became possessed. That the spirits should light the fire and lay the breakfast-table for her, as she said they did, might not attract much attention, but they presently wrote messages or extracts all over the house in tongues which London cooks do not study. Visitors of some learning recognised scraps of French, German, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Persian, and Raratongan. An ancient Persian poet, Saadi, contributed some of his own poetry. Spiritualists flocked to the new temple. The Howitts, the Everitts, and other educated faithful greeted the marvel with reverence; and *Light*, the new organ, enthusiastically announced it to the spiritualist world. Mr. Theobald also made the facts widely known in his work, *Spirit-Workers in the Home Circle.*

Mr. Frank Podmore, the enthusiastic young Psychical Researcher, descended upon the home of the Theobalds. When I knew him in later life, he was

weary and cynical from thirty years of futile search, and he had from the outset a more critical and exact mind than even the scientific workers like Sir W. Barrett and Sir Oliver Lodge. He found that the Greek messages were without the aspirate and other marks above the letters which no good schoolboy, much less a Greek, would venture to omit. The Persian poetry, he discovered, was available to any inquiring cook in *Chambers's Repository*. The locked desks which occasionally were found to contain messages could have papers slipped into them. Mr. Podmore reported his findings in *Light*, but he says that his letter did not extinguish the legend.

Another instance of the good work done in the 'eighties by the Society is the last exposure of Eglinton. We have seen how he had been twice detected in fraudulent materialisations. He had already learned Slade's methods of slate-writing before he was exposed at Munich, and after that date he seems to have confined himself to these phenomena. He was extraordinarily clever, and by the later 'eighties he had become one of the most popular mediums in England. Many attempts were made to expose him, but without definite success. It was noticed that he had all sorts of tricks and mannerisms, and a visitor, Professor Lewis, who concealed his watchfulness, saw Eglinton's muscles at work while the "spirits" were writing; but no one could decisively convict him.

The secretary of the Society for Psychical Research, Dr. R. Hodgson, a tireless hunter of fraudulent mediums, found a conjuror, Mr. S. J. Davey, who

mastered all Eglinton's slate-tricks, and they held sittings so similar to those of Eglinton's that no serious person could doubt their contention. Although Davey had the disadvantage of having sitters who knew that he was tricking them, and were merely alert to catch the fraud, he was never detected. Spiritualists even said that he was a genuine medium, but found it more profitable to pose as a conjuror. As is now well known, the trick consists in distracting the sitter's attention, by ingenious talk or "spirit-touches," and then substituting a prepared slate for the one which has just been ostentatiously cleaned. If the message were to take the form of an answer to a question given by the sitter at the table, so that a slate could not be prepared in advance, a thimble with a bit of slate-pencil fixed in it was surreptitiously slipped on to the medium's finger, and the message was scrawled on the slate while it was held under the table.

Mr. Maskelyne also checked the career of Eglinton as far as the general public was concerned. Mediums of this class had developed very elaborate tricks which greatly impressed the public. You might bring a double-framed slate, tie cord round it when it was closed, and put your seal on the knots of the cord; yet a message would eventually be found on it. As one method was discovered, another was invented. In the 'eighties and 'nineties, when materialisations were under a cloud, the written-message manifestation became extremely popular. Mr. W. E. Robinson published a work in 1899 (*Spirit Slate Writing and*

Kindred Phenomena) in which he exposed thirty different fraudulent ways of getting spirit-messages. All these ways were known to Maskelyne, and he challenged Eglinton to get a message on a slate prepared by himself. Eglinton declined. Maskelyne screwed the frames of the double slate together, pasted paper round the edges, and put it in a tin box soldered in a way which was carefully noted.

Other members of the Society were at work criticising mediums in the monthly *Proceedings*. Zöllner's experiments with Slade, which popular Spiritualism regarded as decisive, were riddled by Mrs. Verrall and other Psychical Research writers. A strong feeling against the Society grew up amongst Spiritualists. Mediums had every reason to detest it, and the Spiritualists who had thought that it was going to furnish scientific evidence of their beliefs were bitterly disappointed. After forty years of activity it has not yet settled even the question of telepathy, about which its members were nearer agreement than on any other point. Indeed, one may almost say that the question of telepathy is to-day more disputed than ever, although it has been the chief interest of the Society for forty years. We will, however, return to this later. Spiritualists generally detest telepathy, which they regard as a rival hypothesis. On the other hand, the members of the Society were generally hostile to the physical phenomena which are, and always will be, the favourite evidence of the ordinary Spiritualists. Such members as Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir William Barrett were always sources of weakness in the

Society in this regard, and we shall eventually find them returning to physical phenomena. But in the 'eighties and 'nineties the Society only added to the trouble which had fallen upon Spiritualism.

In short, the founding of the Society completed the disruption of the movement which the long series of exposures had begun. The early joyous comradeship of learned and unlearned was over. The cultivated person who felt that there was "something in it" now joined the Society for Psychical Research, and sought the "something" on more refined lines than the ordinary spiritualist circle could understand. Dr. Russel Wallace alone clung to the popular movement. Sir William Crookes had, since 1875, buried himself in a sulky silence which he would not break until forty years afterwards. No one knew whether he was a Spiritualist or not.[1] Other distinguished supporters of the early confused days were dying off. Professor Mayo, of King's College, London, had died in 1852, and had in reality never known Spiritualism. Professor de Morgan, who never embraced it, though he admitted abnormal phenomena, had died in 1871. Professor Challis, of Cambridge, whose last ten years were spent in a kind of activity that pained his

[1] In an interview in 1905, Sir W. Crookes told Mr. Harold Begbie that in all his spiritualist research he had "come to a brick wall" (*Master Workers*, p. 215). I later got a friend to ask him the plain question whether he was a Spiritualist or no, and in his reply (December 19, 1914) he evaded the question, and said that his opinions were "not modified in any material manner." In 1916 he wrote in *Light* (December 9) that he accepted Spiritualism, and said that this was merely a "reaffirmation" of his belief. I have already quoted a letter of his, published in *Light*, May 12, 1900, in which he repudicted Spiritualism.

friends, died in 1882. Brougham, Thackeray, and all the old notabilities who had had an encouraging word for it, had died without adopting it. It was culturally impoverished, derided in the press, severely harassed by amateur private detectives, conjurors, and Psychical Researchers, and no longer of interest to the general public.

The future course of our history, therefore, divides into two streams: popular Spiritualism with its physical phenomena, and refined or cultivated Spiritualism with what it calls spiritual phenomena. We shall see how another extraordinarily successful physical medium, like Home, arises in the early 'nineties, and is accredited by so many men of science that the movement raises its head once more, and physical mediums again multiply: with the inevitable sequel of a series of exposures. We shall see that the cultivated Spiritualists, working in the Society for Psychical Research in England and America, meantime pursue their own methods of communication with the dead through automatic writers and trance-mediums. We shall then see how the endorsement of the new physical phenomena by a number of scientific men, although they generally repudiate Spiritualism, leads once more to some reconciliation of the two streams. In fine, we shall have to consider how the tragic conditions of the world after 1914 accentuate this reconciliation, and lead to the "revival" with which we are familiar.

A third movement must, however, be briefly noticed. Theosophy was born of Spiritualism, and

in the 'eighties and 'nineties it had the same effect upon it as the Society for Psychical Research; it drew away from it large numbers of educated people. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, daughter of a German colonel named Hahn who had settled in Russia, and married at the age of seventeen to the sixty-year-old Russian Blavatsky, was forty-five years old when, in 1876, she founded the Theosophical Society at New York. She had married in 1848, but had been only a few months with her husband. She travelled extensively in Asia and America, and from a general interest in the occult, which suited her romantic nature, she passed to Spiritualism and became a medium. We find her at one time mystifying Europeans in Cairo, then winning repute in Russia as a medium, later shining in the mediumistic world of America. Until 1874 her control was the popular favourite of the time, "John King." But she had long combined the ideas of degenerate Buddhism and Hinduism with the creed, and John King gave way to two very superior "mahatmas" of Thibet. The spiritualist element in the ordinary sense (communication with dead mortals) thus yielded to a mass of fantastic semi-Asiatic speculations about reality, which were supposed to be communicated by superior beings. Theosophy was founded, and its adherents came to look down with contempt on popular Spiritualism. The aim of the Theosophic movement was to communicate wisdom, not to put people in touch with dead relatives.

Mme. Blavatsky is chiefly interesting from our

point of view, which must ignore her speculations, as a miracle-worker. Here again the Society for Psychical Research played the part of unfriendly critic; and in this case Spiritualists generally applauded its zeal. She attracted wide attention by her claims in London in 1884, and Dr. R. Hodgson was sent to India to investigate them. After examining numbers of those who had been in contact with her, he came to the conclusion that she was a fraud.[1] It made no more difference to Theosophy than Hodgson's zealous exposures of mediums made to Spiritualists. Mrs. Annie Besant, who had been associated with Bradlaugh since 1874, joined the Theosophists in 1889, and became (in her own words) "a devoted pupil of Mme. Blavatsky." She opened her Theosophical career with *Reincarnation* in 1892, and became virtual head of the movement. This is not the place to tell the later fortunes of the Society, and the schism which later rent it. It is enough to note that its foundation was another of the influences which weakened Spiritualism in the 'eighties and 'nineties by absorbing large numbers of educated women with an inclination to the occult who would otherwise have become Spiritualists.

[1] His report was published in the *Proceedings of the S.P.R.*, vol. iii. Later works on Mme. Blavatsky after her death in 1891, such as V. S. Solovyoff's *Modern Priestess of Isis* (1895), complete the account.

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW SPIRITUALISM

The physical phenomena of the spiritualist movement put a plain issue before us. Either it is true that spirits are active amongst us in our material universe, or every physical medium is a fraud. There is, we shall see in the next chapter, a third conceivable theory. It may be held that forces unknown in the ordinary text-books of physics, or powers of the medium that are not recognised in ordinary psychology, are responsible for the movements. This belief is confined to a few scientific men, who hesitate to admit the existence of spirits, and a very small number of followers. The plain man has much logic on his side when he prefers a plain issue. If it is a fact that at a sitting the table rose six inches, or loud raps were heard, or a guitar was played, or a message written on a slate, then either the medium cheated or Spiritualism is true. This increases the difficulty of a historian of Spiritualism who is not a Spiritualist. It is *mainly* a record of physical phenomena from beginning to end.

But from the start there were other types of manifestations which do not put before us so blunt and painful an issue. We saw that there were three

thousand writing mediums in the United States a few years after 1848. Perhaps it is misleading to call these mediums, though they believe that they are intermediaries through whom spirits communicate. They have no sitters or audiences, and receive no money. They may labour under a delusion when they think that a spirit-power directs their pencils, but only an extreme critic of the movement classes them as "all frauds." Most readers will know one or two of these automatic writers and resent such a classification. Drawing mediums come under the same head. Musical mediums belong to the same family when they openly take, or sit at, the instrument instead of sitting in the dark with the instruments beside them, and merely profess that their rather dreamy playing is guided by spirits. Trance-mediums —men and women whose personality seems to change, and who speak as if they were possessed by spirits of the dead—may fall into the same category; though there is an enormous amount of conscious fraud in this field. From the early days of the movement these more refined and possibly quite honest methods had been used, but as they have little attraction for the general public and do not obtain any prominence, we have had to ignore them.

The new Spiritualism, which found centres and agencies in the Psychical Research Societies of England and America, chiefly set out to exploit this vein. At first it began to explore haunted houses and minutely investigate stories of apparitions. These gave little satisfaction. The old type of haunted house, with

a chain-rattling ghost, disappeared. Enthusiastic Psychical Researchers actually advertised in the London press in the 'nineties, almost in a wistful mood, for some such place to explore. The new type of haunted house, with furniture flying about or oil dripping from the ceiling, always turned out to be the playground, not of a *Poltergeist*, as used to be said, but of some mischievous young person on the premises. The *Poltergeist* (a playful, freakish spirit that turned the house upside down out of fun) has disappeared as completely as the ghost of Lady de Vere. The Psychical Researchers then concentrated upon automatic writers and trance-mediums, and have been mainly employed in this line ever since. With the large amount of merely psychological work that they have done, or with such speculations as those of Mr. Myers in his *Human Personality* (2 vols., 1903), we are not here concerned. We have to consider their work only in so far as it is held by some of them to have a spiritualistic import, or to prove the fact of communication with dead humans.

For twenty years the research centred mainly about the person of the American medium, Mrs. Piper. I have half a dozen volumes of the *Proceedings* of the Society for various years in the 'nineties before me, and, apart from criticisms of ordinary spiritualist claims and general psychological speculation, there is little to notice in them, from our present point of view, except accounts of Mrs. Piper.

Mrs. Piper first appears as an ordinary trance-

medium in Boston in 1874, at a time when the physical phenomena were under a cloud and the new Spiritualism was starting. Her early years were of a familiar type. An "Indian girl," Mrs. Siddons, Bach, Longfellow, and other spirits were said to control her. This was common, and would not to-day attract the Society for Psychical Research. In 1883 she, in her trance-state, declared herself under the control of the spirit of a dead French doctor named Phinuit. For nine years she was supposed to remain under this control, and it was said that she declared such intimate personal details to sitters who were quite unknown to her that it proved the truth of Spiritualism. The American Society for Psychical Research took her in hand in 1885, and for twenty years made a constant study of her utterances. From 1887 to 1905, Dr. Richard Hodgson, whom we have seen to be a remarkably good detective and exposer of frauds, had her under his observation. He was convinced that she was a genuine medium for communication with the spirit-world.

Here I am merely giving an account of the movement, and need not enter upon any criticisms; but a few of the weaknesses pointed out by critics should be made known to the reader. Dr. Phinuit was never able to give such an account of himself that inquirers could verify that such a person had ever existed in the flesh. It would appear that Mrs. Piper had not foreseen this line of inquiry. In 1892 she announced that Phinuit was displaced in control of her by a

young American who had recently died. As he was a cultivated man of well-known family, Dr. Hodgson preferred to speak of him always by the pseudonym "Pelham," but recognised that here was a good opportunity for test questions. It has long been known that "George Pelham" was George Pellew, who had died in 1892. His friends were invited to see Mrs. Piper and put questions about things which were likely to be known only to Pellew and themselves. Dr. Hodgson announced enthusiastically that the tests were met. In fact, Mr. Podmore, who is usually so careful, tells his readers that the character was "consistently and dramatically sustained," and "some of G. P.'s most intimate friends were convinced that they were actually in communication with the deceased G. P."[1] For several years the "G. P." utterances rivalled Eusapia Palladino in interest.

It must be stated that Hodgson's declarations, on which Mr. Podmore's account is based, were more zealous than accurate. Mr. Podmore does, it is true, point out some serious discrepancies and still more serious failures to tell details that ought to have been quite familiar to Pellew, but he seems to have been unaware of the fact that Pellew's relatives, who ought to be the best judges, emphatically denied that there was any ground to assert that George Pellew was communicating. A cousin of the dead man declared that the impersonation was "beneath contempt." His brother said that the utterances

[1] *The Newer Spiritualism*, p. 180.

ascribed to George were " utter drivel and inanity." No relatives would entertain Hodgson's view; and Professor Fiske, who was quoted as one of the convinced sitters, declared that it was quite untrue.[1]

" Pelham " was in 1896 displaced from the control of Mrs. Piper by a spirit calling himself " Imperator," who at an earlier date is supposed to have controlled Stainton Moses. There is no occasion here to enter upon a lengthy analysis of Mrs. Piper's utterances. She did not, in her normal hours, positively claim that she was controlled by spirits. She left it open, inclining to the theory that she derived her information from her sitters by telepathy. Professor William James also declined to believe that she was under spirit-control. Podmore accepts telepathy as the explanation. Sir Oliver Lodge, Dr. Hodgson, Professor Hyslop, and Spiritualists generally, claim that it was genuine spirit-control. Those who do not accept telepathy have the usual alternatives to confront. Mrs. Piper undoubtedly told her sitters numbers of details of which, she plainly said, she had no normal knowledge. There is no clear case recorded in which she told details of which, if she were so disposed, she might not get surreptitious knowledge.

The controversy to which the long career of Mrs. Piper gave rise is as open to-day as it was twenty

[1] These details may be read in a letter to Mr. Edward Clodd from Professor Pellew in the preface to the second edition of Dr. C. Mercier's *Spirit Experiences* (1920).

years ago. A special test which was applied in the effort to reach a definite solution broke down. Gurney died in 1888, and it was to be expected that he would communicate through Mrs. Piper. She presently announced that he was doing so. Professor W. James, who had all the "will to believe" in the world, so strongly rejected this claim that we need not further notice it. Sidgwick died in 1900; Myers in 1901; Hodgson in 1905. None of them gave further proof of identity in their supposed communications through Mrs. Piper than that their mannerisms, which any person might learn about such well-known men, were more or less reproduced. Myers had, as we shall see, left a message in a sealed envelope, and the English mediums had totally failed to read it. Hodgson, before he died, adopted the different method of leaving a lot of matter in cipher, so that his surviving mind alone could give the key. Mrs. Piper quite failed to read the Hodgson tests, although, when she was in a trance, she spoke in such a way that Sir O. Lodge and the spiritualistic Psychic Researchers were convinced that Hodgson was communicating. Test-questions about Hodgson's early life in Australia were not answered.

As the other well-known writing and trance-mediums are of the same type, until we come to certain elaborate methods of recent date, we may run over them briefly. Mrs. Thompson was, perhaps, the next most important. Before 1898 she was an ordinary physical medium. She showed materialisations, spirit-lights, and so on. In 1898 she met

Mr. Myers, and she abandoned the physical for the more refined manifestations. Like Mrs. Piper, she was chiefly reputed for giving, in answer to questions from sitters, certain details which were presumed to be quite unknown to the medium. Such details are generally known to the sitters; and those who believe in telepathy think that they are transferred from the mind of the sitter to the mind of the medium. In some cases they are unknown, or said to be unknown, to the sitters, and have to be verified afterwards.

The main difficulty for the inquirer in such cases is to find absolute security that the medium has not surreptitiously acquired the knowledge. Mr. Hereward Carrington gives in his *Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism* some curious details (from Lunt's *Mysteries of the Séance*, which I have not seen) about the information of mediums. There was in circulation among the American mediums at the beginning of this century a "Blue Book" of an extraordinary character. It was a directory, or *Who's Who?* of people who were apt to consult mediums, and the details were collected by the mediums themselves in the course of their travels. Quite trivial details about the relatives, especially the dead relatives, of a man or woman were included; such as that a dead son had had a gold-filled tooth in such a position. These are precisely the details which are impressed upon us as most evidential in spiritualist literature. The total number of names in the book is not given, but it is said that there were seven thousand names

(with details) for Boston alone. Each medium had previously kept a diary, and, apparently about the end of the last century, they co-operated in this very useful collective enterprise.

The achievements of Mrs. Thompson were always open to that suspicion. Dr. Hodgson, who cannot be described as very critical in his later years, had six sittings with Mrs. Thompson, and he concluded that, as all her details *might* have been derived from certain documents to which she had access, they *were* so derived. In other cases, details which she gave as evidences of identity could have been learned from *Who's Who?* When Sidgwick died in 1900, Mrs. Thompson, in a trance, wrote messages in a hand which closely resembled his, though she said that she had never seen it. There was nothing convincing in the messages themselves.

A third type of trance-medium arose in the French world in 1892. Hélène Smith, as she was called, was an intelligent and energetic lady of twenty-eight when she began to attend spiritualist sittings at Geneva, where she was employed. She became a trance-medium; indeed, one of the most famous of French mediums. Some one suggested that the spirit controlling her was Cagliostro, and she presently discovered that it *was* Cagliostro. Later a sitter casually suggested that it would be most interesting if dead Martians were to communicate through her, and some time afterwards—a sceptic would suggest that Mlle. Smith wanted time to study Flammarion—the spirit of a being that had lived on Mars took control of her,

and communicated a mass of information about that planet.[1]

At that time astronomers were more generally confident than they are to-day that Mars was inhabited; and, naturally, spirits were more communicative than they are to-day about life on it and the other planets. The details given by the Martian about his former home are now known to be largely inaccurate. At the first séance, just after the sitter had made the suggestion, the Martian spirit poured out only a stream of unintelligible words, which were presumed to be of the Martian tongue. Then he was silent for fifteen months; and jesters wondered whether he was learning French or Mlle. Smith learning astronomy. In the end he declared that the Martians had a language of three hundred words, and he gave specimens of it. Linguists remarked that it was strange that the structure of the Martian language was so similar to that of French. Mlle. Smith, however, was for years a very esteemed medium in France and Switzerland, and had some learned defenders.

To return to the work of the Psychical Research Societies of England and America. From the collection of anecdotes of apparitions, which did not yield much profit, some of the workers passed to experiments in thought-transference. Professor (now Sir Oliver) Lodge conducted and published several series of experiments in Liverpool. These and other experiments may be read in Podmore's *Apparitions and Thought-Transference*. They were widely accepted

[1] See Professor Flournoy's *Des Indes à la planète Mars*, 1900.

as proving telepathy, but such criticisms as that which Dr. Mercier gives us in his *Spirit-Experiences* have thrown grave doubt on them. This line of direct experiment seems to have been abandoned, and challenges to prove telepathy experimentally have been consistently ignored. In 1911 an advertiser in the *Times* offered £1,000 for proof of telepathy; and for several years an advertisement offering £100 for such proof was inserted repeatedly in the *Literary Guide*. In recent years the Society for Psychical Research has followed a less direct and precise method, and it is claimed that the results are sound. In its *Proceedings* there frequently appear papers in which a lady, say, on the Continent wills at a certain hour to impress her thoughts on a lady in England. Some interesting drawings by the receptive lady are given as the outcome of these experiments; but there is a sad lack of scientific precision in the account, and in every case we are reduced in the end, as we *never* are in a scientific experiment, to a blind trust in the character of the mediums.

Telepathy would not necessarily have any relation to Spiritualism if it were proved. The late Sir W. Crookes, who accepted it, regarded it as merely a high-power, purely material wireless telegraphy. We are therefore not concerned here to follow the work of members of the Society for Psychical Research in detail along this line. The reader will, no doubt, clearly understand that I am not attempting to record, even in the most general terms, or to appraise the whole work of the Society. We are dealing with

Spiritualism, not with psychology, and have only to consider such work of the Society as is held to support the new Spiritualism.

The English Society had the advantage for many years of the mediumistic services of Mrs. Verrall, the wife of a distinguished Cambridge classical scholar, and later of her daughter. Mrs. Verrall purported to receive messages almost daily from the spirits of the well-known Cambridge men—Sidgwick, Myers, Verrall, etc.—who had been so enthusiastic about research. Naturally, as she had been a friend of theirs and was familiar with their ways, it was difficult to say that any details she gave were evidence of identification. She was also herself an accomplished classical scholar, and thus the Greek and Latin quoted in her "script" did not necessarily come from the dead. It was, in fact, almost impossible to get proof that the messages did not come merely from the medium's unconscious or sub-conscious mind, and various efforts were made to devise some satisfactory test.

The first was, as I said, an agreement that men or women would write short messages and seal them in envelopes. After death they were to communicate the contents of the envelopes through Mrs. Piper, Mrs. Thompson, or Mrs. Verrall, the envelopes were to be opened in the presence of numerous and unassailable witnesses, and the two were to be compared. Myers was the first to do this. He died in 1901, leaving a message in a sealed envelope, though the fact was known only to a few. A month after his death Mrs. Thompson, who was not aware of the test, announced

that Myers was communicating through her. It turned out that the supposed spirit of Myers knew nothing about a test-message. These difficulties are met by a theory that spirits are for a time after death dazed, or find it difficult to communicate, and the members of the Society waited patiently. Toward the end of 1904 Mrs. Verrall announced that Myers, with whom she had been in touch for some time, confidently gave her the contents of the letter. After grave deliberation the envelope was opened, in the presence of a large and anxious body of Psychical Researchers, and there was not the least correspondence between the communicated message and the message contained in the envelope. The failure was explained away by Miss Dallas in her *Mors Janua Vitae*, but it was a very severe check to the hopes of the spiritualist members. The most earnest and spiritual of their colleagues failed, in the course of three years, to "get through." No spirit-clairvoyance had been able to read through the envelope. Months of such communication with the supposed spirit of Myers as they would ordinarily have taken to be genuine beyond cavil were shown to be spurious.

Various other Spiritualists left sealed messages which they were to communicate after death, but the test failed in every case, and the method was abandoned. It is, in fact, of value only in rare cases where you can absolutely rely on the character of the writer, as one could in the case of Myers and Hodgson. The temptation to a Spiritualist to secure a great triumph

by secretly communicating the contents of the message to someone *before* death must be great; and we saw that young ladies of good position often yielded to temptation of that kind. Hodgson tried the different method of leaving behind him amongst his papers a large number of cipher or cryptic writings of which he had said nothing to anybody. It was clear that he intended to communicate the key from beyond, but he has not done so, though he died fifteen years ago.

Meantime, about the beginning of the century, another and more hopeful method had been invented. This was to communicate the same message from the spirit-world at or about the same time to two different mediums ("cross-reference"), or to give part of a message to one medium and complete it or make it intelligible through another ("cross-correspondence"). For the last two decades the hope of the spiritualist members of the two Societies—who are, in fact, the chief sources of vitality in them—has centred about this method.

It will at once be seen that the value of this method depends on the interval of time between the delivery of the two messages. If there is time for the mediums to communicate with each other, or for the second medium to learn, deliberately or casually, about the message delivered to the first medium, the evidence becomes feeble and unconvincing. Dr. Hyslop may assure us that his mediums, Mrs. Chenoweth or Mrs. Smead, are above suspicion. He is, in fact, so conscious that his case rests on this, that he is constantly

repeating that Mrs. Chenoweth "could not, of course, know this," or Mrs. Smead's motives "could not possibly be suspected." We must say the same of the English mediums: Mrs. Verrall, Miss Verrall, Mrs. Holland, etc. The case must not rest to any extent whatever upon their character. Even ladies of high character have been known to strain the Decalogue a little when there was question of the triumph of some elevated spiritual cause. In other cases it is not even a question of their strict veracity: it is a question whether they did or did not tell anybody about the interesting experiment that was in progress. No such weaknesses can be admitted in scientific evidence. Fraud, accident, or coincidence must be absolutely excluded.

I make this general consideration only because there is not space here to record the many interesting experiments of this nature which have been conducted by the Society in England and America since 1901. The reader must apply the canons of evidence for himself. A large number of the more valuable of these experiments are given by Professor Hyslop in his *Contact with the Other World* (1919). Professor Hyslop, who in 1915 wrote me most critical letters about Spiritualism in general and the credulity of Sir Oliver Lodge in particular, became in his later years an enthusiastic Spiritualist and much less critical writer. His work *Life After Death* (1918) discusses general problems, and is not much concerned about evidence. The later work is a very interesting compilation of what Dr. Hyslop regards as the most

weighty experiences and experiments of the preceding twenty years, and is therefore in the nature of a history of those years as far as the theme of this chapter is concerned.

A few instances must be given in order to show the reader both the strength and the weaknesses of the new Spiritualism. On January 28, 1901, Dr. Hodgson was supposed to be communicating with the spirit of Myers through Mrs. Piper. He asked Myers to make Miss Verrall, in England, see a mental picture of a hand and a spear, and record it. Miss Verrall got nothing whatever, though the supposed "Myers" declared on February 4 that he had succeeded. But the curious thing is that three days after Dr. Hodgson had made the request in Boston, *Mrs.* Verrall in Cambridge wrote in her automatic script a somewhat nonsensical sentence in Latin and Greek, ending with a reference to a spear! The experiment was, broadly, a failure; but there remains the fact that Mrs. Verrall, on January 31, made a meaningless and incoherent reference (in Latin) to a spear or javelin (*telum*).

On July 13, 1904, Mr. Piddington, a spiritualist member of the American Society, wrote out the message which he intended to leave after his death. It was connected with the number seven, and his messages after death were to be various references to that number. The weakness of the case is that we have no absolute evidence that Mr. Piddington did not tell anybody. However, on the same day that Mr. Piddington wrote his letter in New York, Mrs. Verrall in England wrote a supposed message from the spirit-

world to the effect that something important was to be recorded, and that Piddington would understand. Nothing more definite occurred for three years, but Dr. Hyslop shows that during 1907, 1908, and 1909, the various automatic writers (Mrs. Piper, Mrs. Verrall, Mrs. Holland, Mrs. Frith, and Mrs. Home) received quite a number of such references to the number seven as Mr. Piddington had intended. Piddington was not dead, and the idea is that Myers read his letter and was proving that spirits might prematurely disclose the contents of such letters. In view of the long interval, most people will wonder if there had not been a leakage of Mr. Piddington's little secret.

In 1906–7 there was another experiment which is often quoted. On December 17, 1906, a passage in rather difficult Latin was dictated to Mrs. Piper, who did not know Latin, and the spirit of Myers was asked to translate it. The issue is really only calculated to encourage the sceptic. A scholar like Myers could have translated at a glance, in spite of the feeble imitation of the style of Tacitus. But it was more than two months before an attempt was made to translate the passage. This and a second attempt (February 20 and 27) were ignominious failures; and even as late as May 27 the attempt to translate suggested only the poorest elementary acquaintance with Latin. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Mrs. Piper was trying to make out the meaning from a Latin dictionary.

In 1907 also occurred what is known as the "Hope,

Star, and Browning incident," which is regarded as very impressive. Mrs. Piper, in America, gave (supposedly from Myers) a reference to " Hope, Star, and Browning." This was on February 11. It was then found that in the written records of Mrs. Verrall there were curious references to stars, to hope, and to Browning's poetry on January 23 and 28. The weakness is that Mrs. Verrall's record was already in America on February 11, and had been seen by the sitter, Mr. Piddington; because Hyslop tells us that he went straight from the sitting with Mrs. Piper to search Mrs. Verrall's script. He adds that, later, Mrs. Verrall, who " had not been told what was happening," received further references to the matter. But as Hyslop gives no date for this, it is useless. Indeed, unlike many of his colleagues, Dr. Hyslop concludes that in this case " the evidence for cross-correspondence is not the best " (p. 173); and the reader will probably agree.

Mr. Gerald Balfour describes, with apparent belief that it is genuine, one of these cross-correspondences in the *Proceedings of the S. P. R.* for March 1917. Mrs. Verrall got in her script a reference to " the Ear of Dionysius." There was nothing strange in this, as Mrs. Verrall was a classical scholar. But three and a half years later Mrs. Willett, another writing medium, who is *not* a classical scholar, received or wrote a lot of classical matter bearing on the Ear of Dionysius. The whole point here is whether in the meantime Mrs. Willett had learned of the original reference. She said that she had not. Mr. Balfour candidly tells us

that he feels sure that she, one day in the intervening period, asked him a question about the Ear of Dionysius.

In conclusion I may give a rather different instance, from Hyslop's book, of the work of the American Society. In 1905 a Mr. F. L. Thompson, a goldsmith, who had merely had the usual lessons in drawing when he was a boy, and had then been apprenticed to an engraver for some years, felt a sudden impulse to begin painting. Nothing is said about the value of these early paintings. But Thompson also felt that he was somehow "Mr. Gifford," which was the name of an artist he had met. He presently learned that Gifford was dead, and he went to an exhibition of his paintings in New York. He then painted scenes which he believed had never come within his experience, yet he felt that they were real and known to Gifford. In short, they consulted Mrs. Chenoweth, Hyslop's favourite medium (and a clergyman's wife), the scenes were eventually discovered, and the coincidence between Thompson's paintings and the scenes themselves, down to details of crooked branches of trees, was remarkable. Dr. Hyslop reproduces the paintings and photographs of the localities. There cannot be any serious doubt that the paintings actually represent the scenes; and, while Gifford certainly knew the scenes, Thompson avowed that he did not. Dr. Hyslop concludes that the spirit of Gifford painted the pictures. A careful reader will, however, conclude that it is not at all clear that Thompson (who had lived near) had not seen

either the localities themselves or pictures of them by Gifford.

These instances will suffice to illustrate the work of the new Spiritualism.[1] The research has its special difficulties, and it is by no means so immune from suspicions of "assisting nature" as many imagine. The greatest delicacy of it is that it generally requires absolute faith in the medium, and does not admit of perfect objective control. You can scarcely ever prove that a detail was "not normally known to the medium," as Dr. Hyslop repeats on every page, or that, in cross-correspondence, a second medium has not learned what is going on. The new methods, in brief, were only suited to a few refined persons of leisure. The general public requires more tangible or visible manifestations. We have now to see how this older Spiritualism revived in the 'nineties, and developed simultaneously with the new Spiritualism.

[1] Dr. Hyslop's works, Podmore's *Newer Spiritualism*, and Mr. Hill's writings will give the interested reader as much further evidence of this kind as he can desire.

CHAPTER XII

THE REVIVAL OF THE OLDER SPIRITUALISM

We left the older Spiritualism in a somewhat despondent and shrunken condition in the year 1885. For the bolder types of phenomena there were hardly a score of mediums in England, and there was a corresponding modesty in the United States. Educated occultists generally were now, not Spiritualists, but members of the Psychical Research Society. *Light*, the British organ of the movement, toiled on zealously through the period of depression, but public opinion was generally hostile or contemptuous, and the little circles of the faithful were regarded rather as groups of "peculiar people." In 1884 a rather belated enthusiast, the spiritualist lecturer Cyriax, had quite gravely estimated at Berlin that there were sixty million Spiritualists in the world. It was a preposterous exaggeration at the time, but even the most exalted optimist would not have ventured as far as ten millions in the later 'eighties. The Spiritualists of the world were probably well under a million.

It was in 1892 that the movement began again to show signs of vitality. Rumours spread from country to country that a marvellous new medium, of the old heroic type, had arisen in Italy, and was passing

more stringent tests than any medium had ever done before. Eusapia Palladino—her name is often spelt Paladino, but she told Carrington that it was Palladino —is in many respects the most remarkable medium that the movement ever produced. She did not pretend that she was ever wafted from room to room. She rarely showed materialisations, or produced the more sensational phenomena that some of the earlier mediums had claimed. Her program varied little from 1892 until the end, and every sitter knew perfectly well what to look for. She repeatedly cheated on the same lines, and every observer was keen to notice these tricks. Yet she convinced more scientific men than all the other mediums put together, and this after more sustained and repeated trials than any other medium had ever had to undergo.

She was born in 1854, in the Neapolitan district, of poor peasants who died when she was a child. It seems to be admitted that she was for a time in the service of an acrobat or conjuror. At the age of thirteen she became acquainted with Spiritualism, which, in spite of Papal frowns, spread in Italy after Home's prolonged stay there. We saw that he had been in Naples a few years before. Eusapia seems at that time to have developed "powers," but she early married a small Neapolitan shopkeeper and settled down to the domestic ways of that region. She had had no schooling, and to the end she was scarcely able to read or write. In the later 'eighties she was therefore as poor and obscure as the wife

of a small Italian shopkeeper commonly is. Within twenty years she became rich, collected a vast amount of jewellery, and was entertained in some of the best hotels of Europe and the houses of men of considerable distinction.

In the later 'seventies or early 'eighties she resumed her mediumistic powers. "John King" took control of her, and was far more successful than he had been with any of his earlier earthly instruments. Professor Chiaia, of Naples, heard of her powers, and studied her. He could find no flaw in her performances, and he invited other professors to examine her. From the start she performed the wonders which filled her sittings throughout her career. Her ordinary feat was to lay her hands on, or above, a light table, at which she sat, and it tilted on two legs or rose bodily into the air. Behind her in a cabinet, or screened space, was a smaller table, with various musical instruments and other objects. These came out of the cabinet, and were often thrown or piled on the table. Other furniture in the room moved toward her. Moulds of wax or putty or cement were placed some distance from her, yet, when the light was turned up, impressions of hands or faces were found on them. On some occasions "materialised" forms were dimly seen by the sitters; though these are the least authenticated of her phenomena. She would also depress a letter-scale by placing her hands on either side of it, and lowering them. A mysterious wind blew out the curtains behind her; and visitors said that they felt a current of cold air

blowing outward from an old wound in her head. At times she apported flowers; but she was several times detected in fraud when she did this. Above all—it is important to remember—the sitters were distracted all the time by ghostly touches and tugs at their hair or beards, in spite of their repeated protests.

In 1888 Professor Chiaia, who could detect no fraud, challenged Professor Lombroso to examine her. Lombroso, the most distinguished scientific man in Italy, and one of the leading criminologists of the world, was a materialist. He ignored the challenge for some time, but in 1891 he took it up. There was great excitement when it was known that Lombroso decided that there was no fraud. Unfortunately, Lombroso waited many years before writing on the matter, and at the time when he did eventually write his *Ricerche sui fenomeni ipnotici e spiritici* (in English, *After Death—What?* 1909) he was not in a fit condition to deal with such matters. The complaint is often made that, when any distinguished man declares for Spiritualism, sceptics at once begin to suggest that he was in a state of senile decay. But no sort of disposition either way can alter the historical facts. Such men as Robert Owen, Professor Hare, Professor Challis, Professor Zöllner, Professor Weber, and Professor Lombroso were near the end of their lives when they accepted Spiritualism. Sir W. Crookes was eighty-five years old when he at length plainly said that he was a Spiritualist. As to Lombroso, his daughter and biographer, Gina Ferrero,

says that during the last three years of his life (1906–9), when he wrote his book, he suffered chronically from arteriosclerosis, and occasionally from angina pectoris, and that he was always tired and sleepy and could not work for more than half an hour at a time. However, he was convinced that the dead still live; though, retaining his materialism (as spiritualist writers always omit to say when they refer to him), he regarded the "soul" as a material fluid.

Other scientific men studied Eusapia as early as 1892, when her sittings began to attract great attention. Aksakoff, the Russian lawyer who had been working twenty years for the movement, fully endorsed her. The famous astromoner Schiaparelli attended many sittings; but it is quite wrong to say, as is often said, that he was converted. He expressly assured M. Flammarion that he remained agnostic,[1] and that he was not allowed to impose conditions which would exclude fraud. Professor Richet, a distinguished French physiologist, attended, and concluded that she was genuine. Several less important professors (Brofferio, Gerosa, etc.) came to the same conclusion.

Eusapia was to be taken seriously. She was invited to Rome, and she repeated her triumphs there in the winter of 1893–4. Professor Richet invited her to his house in France in the summer of 1894, and Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor Sidgwick, and Mr. Myers joined the party. Lodge and Myers

[1] See Flammarion in his *Forces Naturelles Inconnues*, p. 93.

returned to England with a report that the phenomena were genuine; which was a great triumph and a refreshing experience for the older type of Spiritualism. Dr. Hodgson, however, examining the published evidence, maintained that fraud was possible and probable. Eusapia was invited to Cambridge, and the well-known group of Spiritualists and Psychic Researchers there examined her. Mr. Myers reported on the sittings in the *Journal of the S. P. R.* (vol. vii, p. 133), and said that not a single phenomenon was plainly genuine. Fraud was detected repeatedly, and it was of such a nature that Eusapia must have had "long practice." Sir Oliver Lodge concurred in giving up Eusapia, and the English Society decided to have nothing further to do with her.

The French and Italian admirers of Eusapia were very scornful, and they held fresh sittings which were so successful that Sir O. Lodge and (it is said) Myers returned to their belief in her. Dr. Maxwell, of France, and Professor Morselli and others, of Italy, joined the growing circle of her scientific defenders. Flammarion, the astronomer, who had since the early 'fifties admitted the abnormal powers of mediums, though he has never accepted Spiritualism, invited her to his house at Paris. Though he caught her cheating several times, he concluded that most of her phenomena were genuine. Indeed, practically all her admirers agree with the verdict of Professor Morselli, who has written the fullest account of her marvels, that at least a tenth of her performances were fraudulent. Many scientific men continued

to reject all her performances. The French astronomer Antoniadi studied her at his colleague's house in 1906. Flammarion candidly reproduces Antoniadi's report in his book, and it concludes: "I am convinced beyond any possibility of doubt that it is all fraud from beginning to end."[1] Professor le Bon and Professor Dastre, of the Paris University, examined her in the same year, and concluded that she was a mere cheat. They succeeded in installing a lamp behind her, of which she knew nothing, and they clearly saw her release her foot and use it. During the same period she underwent a lengthy examination by the General Psychological Institute of Paris. It reported very unfavourably, on the whole, pointing out that the control of her hands and feet was imperfect on account of the conditions she herself laid down.

She was now a European celebrity, charging very high fees and heaping up jewellery, of which she was very fond. Professor Ochorowicz invited her to Warsaw, and she convinced him and others. In 1909 the Americans invited her. Hodgson, her relentless critic, was dead by that time. Her performances there were a failure. At one sitting a young man crept unobserved behind her, and, when things began to move behind her in the dark, he grasped the foot which she was using and exposed her. Special sittings were to be held at Columbia University, and the professors had prepared some elaborate apparatus to control her. But from the

[1] *Les Forces Naturelles Inconnues*, p. 149.

start her performances were so poor and fraudulent that the professors did not think it necessary to use their appliances. She returned to Italy in dejection and great anger—she was always fierce against her critics—but was again rehabilitated. The Society for Psychical Research sent Mr. Hereward Carrington, an amateur conjuror who had exposed many mediums, with Mr. Bagally and the Honourable Everard Fielding to Naples to study her. In their hotel she completely mystified these three keen observers, and they reported her genuine.[1]

I will, as usual, refrain from detailed criticism, since I am concerned here only to explain the various fortunes of the movement. By the end of the century Eusapia Palladino had a formidable body of admirers: Lombroso, Morselli, Chiaia, Brofferio, Gerosi, Ochorowicz, Richet, Flammarion, Maxwell, Lodge, Myers, Barrett, and a few other scientific men. The reader should understand that of these only Lodge, Myers, Barrett, and Lombroso (in the qualified sense I have indicated) are Spiritualists. The others belong to a school which admits the phenomena of Eusapia Palladino and (in some cases) later physical mediums, but they see no proof of the existence of spirits or the immortality of the mind. They think that the medium possesses obscure and abnormal powers to do these

[1] See the account in Mr. Carrington's *Modern Psychical Phenomena*, 1919. It should be stated that Mr. Carrington already believed in Eusapia, though he held that nearly every other physical medium was a fraud. See his *Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism*, 1907, in which he defends even her doings in America. One, at least, of his companions also believed in her already.

things. On the other hand, many leading Spiritualists did not accept her phenomena. Dr. Hyslop, in his voluminous work *Contact with the Other World*, dismisses her in a few lines, curiously concluding: "I shall not defend the case here, inasmuch as public opinion generally accepts the verdict of trickery" (p. 351). It is bold in America to profess a belief in Eusapia.

But the testimony of a dozen men of science to the genuineness of her physical phenomena, whatever theory they formed of them, was enough to restore the drooping frame of Spiritualism. The ordinary press of the world again began to speak with respect. Levitation was "endorsed by science." Even materialisation received a scientific sanction, as many of these scientific men claimed that busts or shadowy forms or hands had appeared at her sittings. This was enough to give a great new stimulus to the movement. In popular literature, in fact, most of these scientific men were described as Spiritualists, and it was vaguely claimed that all scientific men who consented to inquire had been converted. Even Antoniadi, Schiaparelli, and others who had inquired and rejected were described as Spiritualists.

In the nineties, therefore, we find some of the old mediums returning to the field and new mediums arising. Mme. d'Espérance had already returned to activity. She turned up at Gothenburg, and was soon greatly esteemed as "the Gothenburg medium." Aksakoff took an interest in her, and, though he was not at all convinced by her "materialisations," he

was friendly. He contributes a flattering introduction to her book, *Shadow-Land* (1897), yet he contrives to hint very plainly that she—he would say unconsciously, no doubt—impersonated "Yolande." There are in the book several photographs of her "ghosts," taken by Aksakoff, and one of Mme. d'Espérance. Some of the ghosts are dolls or pictures, but "Yolande" is quite clearly the medium.

In 1893 she visited Aksakoff at St. Petersburg. Lehmann describes in his *Aberglaube und Zauberei* (pp. 363–4) an extraordinary sitting which she gave. Aksakoff had said that her own body ought to be dematerialised if Yolande were materialised out of it. A few days later, during a private sitting at Helsingfors, she was partly dematerialised. She seemed still to sit in her chair, but sitters were allowed to feel with their hands that the lower part of her trunk and legs were not there. Yet she talked to them, and drank, to show that she was real. They were greatly mystified, but Lehmann says that an engineer named Schoultz saw how it was done. He saw her rise and make curious movements with her body. He then noticed that the back of the chair was not solid, but a mere wooden frame, hollow in the centre, and she must, under cover of her draperies, have got her legs through it.

Flammarion tells of various mediums who were active at Paris during the same period. An American medium, Mrs. Williams, was the guest there in 1894 of the Duchesse de Pomar. But her "ghosts" were such obviously lifeless figures that Parisians refused

to take her seriously. One bold sitter invaded the cabinet, and found her dressing in masculine garments, with quite a number of dolls. It was discovered that, as she was never searched, she brought in all her apparatus in a large bag suspended under her skirts. The exposure did not damage her in America, where she spoke eloquently, on her return, about the "savages of Paris."

In the same year another medium of the old days came to grief. We saw in a previous chapter how Miss Wood, of Newcastle, was detected walking on her knees and dressed as an Indian girl. Miss Wood's partner in the north had been Miss Fairlamb, who had since become Mrs. Mellon. She was detected in England, and went to Australia. During a sitting in her house at Sydney, Mr. T. S. Henry, who describes the affair in his book, *A Record of Research and Experiment*, seized the ghost. The Spiritualists present tried to drag him away, but, at the cost of his clothes, he held on until the lights appeared. The ghost was Mrs. Mellon, in mask and muslin, walking on her knees. The news was received with pain in England, for Mr. Stead had recently described her as "the one person of undoubted materialising faculty and undoubted character."

A few years later Mrs. Corner (Florrie Cook) had her last exposure, as I have previously described. Professor Ochorowicz, a sympathetic student of mediums, had invited her to Poland in 1899. She was still materialising. Ochorowicz and his friends dismissed her performances as "a wretched comedy."

Germany a few years later contributed a sensational case to the calendar. Frau Anna Rothe, who was under the patronage of Princess Karadja, had for some years a remarkably prosperous career at Berlin. The information she gave to her aristocratic sitters about themselves and their dead relatives was surprising; and she "apported" flowers and fruit with great facility. Spiritualism grew at Berlin, especially among the wealthy. There were sceptics, however, and Dr. E. Bohn wrote a work (*Der Fall Rothe*, 1901) in which he openly suggested that she was a fraud. A man one day in 1902 got into a good position for watching her, and he saw her "apport" the oranges from her bosom and the bouquets from under her skirts. She was prosecuted (March 1902) and sentenced to eighteen months in prison.

The story of the movement now, in fact, becomes once more a calendar of exposures. It had so far revived in every country that mediums were bold, and the oldest tricks were used. No new converts of any particular importance were made, and in America, at the close of the last century, the number of Spiritualists was returned in the Census Report as only 45,030. The success of Palladino had not, as I explained, the same influence in America as in Europe. In England the Spiritualists still had the patronage of Sir Oliver Lodge and Dr. R. Wallace; and the high journalistic ability of Mr. Stead was at this period zealously enlisted in its interest. His journal, *Borderland*, almost reproduced the apostolic fervour of the early days, and his "bureau" was a very effective

propaganda-centre of the movement. We may say that from 1895 to 1905 the movement steadily increased, though figures are not available.

It is quite inevitable that in a movement like Spiritualism an historical account must take the form of an account of mediums. The organisation is simple, and there are no authorities apart from the mediums. The annual Congresses have little interest for any but a Spiritualist. The life of the movement consists essentially in the achievements of the mediums, and, as these vary little from decade to decade, historical interest in them only begins with their exposure. At all events, an historical account would be strange if it omitted this aspect, and we will now see that the renewed prosperity of Spiritualism is, as usual, reflected in the large number of exposures of well-known mediums from 1905 to 1914.

The English branch of the movement received the first severe shock. Materialising mediums had been comparatively rare, but in the early part of this century the London Spiritualists considered that they had one of indubitable power. At this period, having been stimulated by certain sittings in Leicester in the later 'nineties, I was making my early research into Spiritualism, and I was told that Frederick George Foster Craddock was not only unquestionably genuine and powerful, but the only genuine medium in London. His sittings were held with a cultivated circle of Spiritualists in St. John's Wood. He was, I was told, a furniture-porter, a simple-minded man who was content with the very modest fee which his patrons

gave him. Men and women of distinction often attended the studio in St. John's Wood, and three different ghostly figures came out of the cabinet, when Craddock sat in it in a state of trance, and walked about the room. Yet in June 1906 Craddock met the invariable fate of materialising mediums. He had abandoned his friends or patrons in St. John's Wood, and was making a good deal of money by holding sittings at his house at Pinner. Colonel Mayhew, who obtained admission, soon had proof that Craddock was a fraud. He named friends who were not dead, or had never existed, and Craddock caused their "spirits" to appear in materialised form. Colonel Mayhew seized the ghost, found that it was Craddock, and informed the police. He was fined ten pounds at Edgware Police Court.[1]

Mr. Carrington's *Personal Experiences in Spiritualism* (1913) gives us very interesting evidence that at the same period (1906–9) the American branch of the movement was in a similarly loose condition. In 1907 Mr. Carrington visited the summer-camp at Lily Dale, in the north of New York State. Summer-camps are, as is known, a familar feature of American life, and in the palmy days of Spiritualism a number of these gatherings were held every year. There had been much scandal in connection with them, and the membership had fallen low, so that in the early part of this century Lily Dale was the only centre. Hundreds of Spiritualists gathered there in the summer, and dozens or scores of professional

[1] The *Times*, June 21, 1906.

mediums held sittings in the houses. In 1907 Carrington found three materialising mediums, three trumpet mediums, photographers, slate-writers, and all types.

He visited several of them, and found that they were all fraudulent. The photographer refused emphatically to allow him to see the developing of the plates, and on the completed photograph, when it was given to him, he saw that the figure of a "ghost" had been taken from a newspaper or book. The trumpet mediums, or ladies who provide tubes or trumpets through which the spirits of your dead relatives speak directly to you, worked (as they invariably do) in pitch darkness, and he could plainly hear the medium articulating the supposed ghostly message into the tube. Carrington demanded a message from his father, an Englishman, and it came in a nasal American voice. He asked for dead friends who had never existed, and they gave him friendly greetings. At the materialisation sittings he noticed that it was the easiest thing in the world for a confederate to enter the room, loosen a few of the tacks which nailed the cloth to the frame of the cabinet, and then issue from the cabinet as ghosts. Again he asked for the ghosts of relatives who had never existed, and they came. One ghost had its drapery caught on a nail, and it meekly waited outside the cabinet for one of the sitters to unhook its clothing. The most famous of American mediums of the time, Keeler, was there, reading questions rolled up into pellets and getting messages on slates. He also gave Carrington messages from

fictitious relatives, and, clever as he undoubtedly was, Carrington was able to duplicate all his tricks, and in disguise gave sittings to Spiritualists who acknowledged that he did all that their great Keeler did.

The reader will remember Mr. Hereward Carrington as the emissary of the Society for Psychical Research who in 1910 was completely convinced by Eusapia Palladino. His account of his experiences with her (*Modern Psychical Phenomena*, 1919) does not seem to present us with the same man as the Carrington of 1907. He frankly describes himself as being one day thrown into an extraordinary state of excitement because a bell rang in his room. Eusapia was not present, so that he called at once for an exact verification of this wonderful phenomena without a medium. It is fairly clear from his own description that the bell had merely fallen from a ledge or hook or something of the kind.

His earlier works are very valuable and interesting studies of mediumistic fraud. In both of them he maintains, after years of inquiry, that 98 per cent. of the physical phenomena of the spiritualist movement are fraudulent. I understand that, apart from Eusapia, he still, although a convinced Spiritualist, holds that opinion. Certainly his *Personal Experiences* shows us the American mediumistic world in the first decade of this century as gross and bold as in the later 'fifties of the last century. A materialising medium whom he visited in New York (in 1908, apparently) habitually introduced the ghost (a very

solid ghost) of Queen Victoria, and insisted on the American sitters standing up to receive her ! As there were three Catholic priests in the circle on the occasion of Carrington's visit, St. Cecilia honoured them by appearing.

In Chicago there were two Misses Bangs who had a great reputation by having pictures of your dead relatives painted by spirit-power before your eyes, in broad daylight, and giving you replies written on a blank sheet of paper which you enclosed and sealed with your letter of inquiry. No one could detect their method, though even the President of the National Spiritualist Association of America declared to Carrington that they were " the greatest kind of humbug." Carrington gives a very ingenious and probable explanation of their procedure. In his *Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism* (1907) he discusses every variety of mediumistic fraud, and he incidentally throws some light on the art with which these are concealed. There had appeared in America a work, *Revelations of a Spirit-Medium*, which laid bare a good deal of the machinery of the trade. Mr. Carrington says that the American Spiritualists bought up and destroyed all the copies that got into circulation.

In 1908 another famous American materialising medium, Miller, of San Francisco, was badly exposed. He had gone to Paris as an amateur medium, but his sittings soon aroused suspicion. The French insisted on stripping him before a sitting, and putting specially prepared garments on him. He did, it is true, pro-

duce ghosts in spite of this, but through him the spirits announced that they did not like the stripping, and they further suggested a handsome present to the medium. Professor de Vesme, an esteemed member of the scientific psychic school, and Léon Denis, the head of the French Spiritualists, openly accused him of fraud. It was said that the ghosts which appeared while Miller sat in front of the cabinet were dolls (more probably pictures), and in other cases he used a little drapery and impersonated them. In the end they found in the cabinet after a sitting some fine tulle and a black cloth steeped in perfume; which threw some light on the "beautiful" girl, of delicious odour, who used to step out of the cabinet and gently offer her hand to sitters.[1]

Before the end of the same year, 1909, Berlin had a fresh sensation. Frau Anna Rothe had died, and yielded place in the esteem of the aristocracy of Berlin to Frau Anna Abend. She and her husband made large sums of money for several years, but the police remembered Frau Rothe, and sent a detective. He roughly seized the first ghost that appeared, and found that it was Frau Abend, heavily veiled. In the cabinet the police found tulle enough to drape six ghosts. In the house they found a "Blue Book," like that of the American mediums, with an enormous amount of information about possible sitters; and they found that the Abends had a second address to which Berlin florists used to send the flowers which would appear at the sittings as "apports." The Abends

[1] *Psychische Studien*, March 1909.

were acquitted on purely technical grounds, and were enthusiastically welcomed back by the Berlin Spiritualists.[1]

Italy next produced, in 1910, a rival to Eusapia Palladino. Lucia Sordi, as she was named, was a young married peasant-woman of great muscular strength, and she used to have the assistance—purely magnetic, of course—at her sittings of her two little girls, aged thirteen and fifteen. She did more marvellous things than Palladino, and the new scientific group of inquirers which Eusapia had called into existence made a very serious study of her. Most of them accepted her powers as genuine. The Italian spiritualist journal, *Luce e Ombra*, was filled with her doings all through 1910. She was bound with every variety of cord and bandaged, and was even fastened in a kind of wicker-cage, yet miracles of the first rank, besides the ordinary phenomena, occurred. The table was not merely levitated, but carried out of the room. The spirits seized a bottle of wine on the table, and poured out a glass for each sitter. The family cat was "apported." The sitters were not merely touched by ghostly hands, and kissed by ghostly lips, but bitten by very solid teeth. After a year or more of this, most of the inquirers were forced to conclude that Lucia got out of any sort of confinement, and she was generally abandoned; but some of the Italian professors continued for three years to study her.

The same year, 1910, had two further disillusions for

[1] *Psychische Studien*, November 1909.

the Spiritualists of the world. There were now about sixty spiritualist periodicals in existence, and the moment a powerful new medium appeared in any country, the news was flashed over the world. The only journal which I find equally prompt and generous in publishing the exposures of these new portents is the German *Psychische Studien*, and its pages record painful scandals every few months in the years before the war.

The Australian medium, Bailey, was one of the chief victims of 1910. Professor Reichel, a wealthy French inquirer of the psychic school, had heard of his great reputation, and had paid his expenses to France. Bailey had for years produced very remarkable "apports": ancient Egyptian writings (which proved to be only a few days old), silks from India, strange birds, and so on. He was lodged with Count de Rochas at Grenoble, and stripped naked before each sitting. He found the conditions very uncongenial, and could do little; but no doubt the ordinary spiritualist circle would have been greatly edified to discover that, after being thoroughly searched, he apported two little birds. The birds, however, which he described as foreign, proved to be of the district, and on inquiry it was found that he had bought them in Grenoble. I leave it to the imagination where he had concealed them. Professor Reichel paid his passage home with considerable disgust, and he resumed his work in Australia.

Professor Reichel was, meantime, on the track of

another great medium. From Costa Rica it was announced that the daughter of an important civic official had developed powers of materialisation and levitation, and the good news spread over the world. The French and English spiritualist journals had most promising accounts of her character and performances. Professor Reichel went out to Costa Rica in October 1910, and it is not necessary to say more than that he found, to his warmly expressed disgust (in *Pyschische Studien*), that the pretty Ofelia Corralès was one of the thinnest frauds he had ever encountered. Locally her doings were notorious, but her father and a few admirers—including the Englishman who supplied the account to *Light*—had given grossly inaccurate accounts of them. She "levitated" by standing on a stool in the dark—Reichel smuggled in some luminous paper and saw her legs—and her "ghost" was well known to be a servant-girl of the district.

But it is wearisome to repeat these monotonous stories, and I will pass rapidly to the modern development. Year by year the more candid spiritualist journals of the world recorded exposures. *Light* announced several in England, yet continued to hail with enthusiasm each new star that appeared on the horizon. In 1912 it was full of the marvellous performances of Mrs. Emma Wriedt, an American medium who was visiting London. Mrs. Wriedt was a trumpet or direct-voice medium, and as these mediums always require pitch darkness, there is no possibility of a direct exposure unless a sitter breaks

the conditions by seizing the trumpet or causing a light. Indirectly, of course, they are often quite recognisable, when an English or Continental "spirit" speaks with a pronounced American accent, or you summon the shade of some Uncle Henry who never existed. Mrs. Wriedt, however, was fully exposed in Norway in the autumn of 1912. Professor Birkeland, who was present, noticed something strange about her trumpets. He seized them, and carried them to a chemical analyst; and it was found that Mrs. Wriedt had made a skilful use of certain very earthly chemicals. She was one of the most respected and esteemed mediums in the movement.

Italy continued to supply mediums to meet the demands of the psychic school, but none was so successful as Eusapia Palladino. The daughter of a chemist of Turin, Linda Gazerra, a well-educated woman, had a high repute from 1908 to 1912 for violent physical phenomena, apports, and materialisations. Dr. Imoda studied her for nearly the whole of that period, and his book, *Fotografie di Fantasmi* (1912), gives numbers of photographs of her ghosts. Professor Richet studied and endorsed her. But Baron von Schrenck-Notzing, a medical man of the psychic school, made a more thorough study of her at Paris in 1911, and he had little difficulty in showing that she was fraudulent. She, like Palladino, contrived to release her hands and feet from control and use them. She would not permit a thorough examination of her person, even by ladies, before a sitting, and she thus had ample opportunities

for concealing everything. Schrenck-Notzing believes that she even added false hair to her own, and concealed live birds (to be "apported") in it.[1] Two years later a new Italian medium, Francesco Carancini, appeared; and it need only be said that he soon disappeared.

Finally, we must notice a French medium, Marthe Beraud, whose extraordinary performances cover the whole of the period I have just reviewed, yet who is to-day in the highest esteem in the spiritualist world, especially in London. There has just been issued an English translation by Mr. Fournier d'Albe, of the German work of Baron von Schrenck-Notzing, *Materialisations-Phänomene* (1914), which contains between two and three hundred excellent photographs of materialisations with this medium. I have told her story, and criticised her sittings, in my earlier work, *Is Spiritualism Based on Fraud?* but the present sketch would be ludicrously incomplete without a short account of her.

Mlle. Beraud is the daughter of a French officer. In 1903 she lived with the family of General Noel in Algiers, and was engaged to the General's son. The son died, and Marthe consoled the mother by discovering mediumistic powers. In 1905 Professor Richet was invited to study her materialisations, and he endorsed them. The *Annals of Psychic Science* then, in 1905 and 1906, drew the attention of the world to her wonderful gifts, but in the meantime an Algiers lawyer, M. Marsault, had fully exposed

[1] *Psychische Studien*, March 1912.

the trickery that was employed, and had wrung a confession from Marthe herself. His report may be read in an article which appeared in the *Proceedings of the S. P. R.* in July 1914. Professor Richet and the Spiritualists evaded the force of this exposure, but Marthe Beraud left Algiers and began to work in Paris. There a fairly wealthy woman, Mme. Bisson, adopted her; and it is in Mme. Bisson's house that most of the sittings described in Schrenck-Notzing's book occurred. In her earlier phase, she had been known as "Marthe B." Mme. Bisson christened her "Rose Dupont." Baron von Schrenck-Notzing gives her the name of "Eva C." As he gives in the introduction to his book a very frank account of her character, perhaps he is justified; but it is acknowledged, though it was long suppressed, that she is the Marthe Beraud of the "Villa Carmen Phenomena" in Algiers.

When Baron von Schrenck-Notzing's book appeared in 1914, and Mme. Bisson brought out in French a much shorter and more discreet version, a German lady-doctor, Mathilde von Kemnitz, published a drastic and annihilating criticism of it (*Moderne Mediumforschung*, 1914). I need not repeat the criticisms here, but the reader will quite fail to understand modern Spiritualism unless certain details of a rather delicate character are given.

We saw that Bailey was stripped to the skin, yet he smuggled two small birds into the room. This, of course, is part of the strength of the new school of scientific inquirers. They strip the medium, even

(at times) examine the body, and then make him or her put on specially prepared clothing for the sitting. Baron von Schrenck-Notzing claims to have carried these precautions to the most rigorous conceivable point. Marthe was stripped before each sitting by Mme. Bisson, and sewn into tight-fitting garments. Her mouth was examined, but the account of the examination of other parts of her body is not satisfactory. In any case, it is certain, and is admitted by the Baron, that, in spite of all his search, she smuggled articles into the cabinet. In some photos he admits that Marthe is the ghost, with fine drapery about her. In most of the others the ghost is quite obviously a paper-picture, pinned on the curtains. There is strong reason to believe that she swallowed her material in advance, and was able to bring it up from her stomach. Many such cases are known in science. On three or four occasions they put a net over her head and mouth. There is every reason to believe that on these and other occasions she used other parts of her body for concealment.

Here the reader has the last word in mediumship of the physical type. The medium is pitted against men of science, and wins. At least Marthe Beraud is considered by Spiritualists, and by some men of the scientific psychic school, to have won. She has been recently in London, and the leading London Spiritualists greeted her with admiring enthusiasm. Her story therefore, stretching from 1903 to 1920, brings our historical sketch up to date, and will give the reader a better insight into the position of

the older Spiritualism than a larger number of other cases would. It explains also the close approach once more of the old and the new Spiritualism, but this, and the powerful stimulus given by the war, demand a final chapter.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RECENT GROWTH

I AM conscious of one serious defect in the narrative which I have laid before the reader. Phases of expansion and contraction of the movement have been described, but this vague description has not been supported by statistics. The excuse is that such statistics are not available. Historians of the earlier period, such as Capron and Mrs. Hardinge, are content to mention the "one or two millions" which spiritualist writers claimed in America in the later 'fifties. Even at later dates we get only rhetorical allusions to millions. In 1868 a speaker announced at a meeting of the London "Progressive Society" that at that date the faithful numbered four millions. This is outrageous, as the "recantation-period" was still on in America, the expansion in England did not begin until 1871, and the movement had very little hold on the Continent. More ludicrous still is the contention that it had twenty million followers in 1875; while the claim that there were sixty millions in 1884 is the last extreme of rhetorical licence.

Kiesewetter gives in his History a few figures which slightly assist us. He found that in 1890 there were about a hundred spiritualist organs in the world. As he assigns thirty of these to England, where there were

not much more than a tenth of the number, his figure is rather weird. He seems to be nearer the truth when he gives about seventy spiritualist journals for the whole world in the year 1909. Of these twenty were French, and twenty-five belonged to the Spanish-speaking world, into whose dense mental atmosphere the light of criticism and exposure rarely penetrated. I reproduce even this figure with reserve, but it at least shows the interesting fact that spiritualist literature was most abundant in Latin, and presumably Catholic, countries!

The nearest approach to even moderate accuracy is found in the figures for America, yet these in turn warn us chiefly to distrust all figures. I have said that at the American Census for 1900 the authorities gave the total number of Spiritualists in the United States as 45,030. This was an amazing drop from current estimates, yet, as everyone knows, the denominational figures of census-results are rather inflated than otherwise. The American Spiritualists have not since that date thought in millions, but the figures they have annually published were obviously reckless and unreliable. Taking their figures from that very careful American annual, *The International Year Book*, I find these estimates for the recent years to which I have access:

Year.	Societies.	Members.	Public mediums.
1909	1,000	100,000	—
1910	700	400,000	1,000
1912	800	200,000	2,000
1916	1,000	600,000	1,500
1917	1,000	600,000	1,500
1918	1,000	600,000	1,500

It is not stated whence the *Year Book* derived its figures, beyond a vague assurance that they came from the National Spiritualist Association. It seems, however, that for the year 1910 the Association claimed "75,000 avowed adherents, with a constituency of nearly 2,000,000." The "constituency" seems to include everybody who ever thought about Spiritualism. At all events, when the census results for 1910 were published, the spiritualist total in the United States, with a population of 90,000,000, was found to be 150,000; and that is a round number supplied by the body itself.

We shall therefore not be very parsimonious if we suppose that there were, in the early years of the war, about 200,000 Spiritualists in the world, as the *International Year Book* for 1916 states, or one in ten thousand of the population of the earth. There were, however, new influences at work which greatly encouraged popular Spiritualism, and very soon the terrible devastation of the world-war would create the emotional conditions on which it thrives.

The first of these influences was clearly the appearance of what I have called a scientific psychic school. The Society for Psychical Research and kindred societies had for years done grave damage to the popular movement. Podmore and Hodgson, two of the ablest members of the English Society, had exposed one medium after another, and their periodical was often unpleasant reading for Spiritualists. A very wide interval separated the two camps, and men like Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir W. Barrett did very little

in those days to encourage the popular belief. Spiritualiam was not intellectually respectable. Psychical Research was.

The obstinate endorsement of the physical phenomena of the movement by the large number of scientific and medical men whom I have named tended greatly to heal this breach. It mattered very little that they refused to believe in spirit, and used very disdainful language about Spiritualism. The Spiritualist insisted that they were quite competent to observe, but quite incompetent to theorise. So at least the better-informed Spiritualists said, but the great majority of them thought, and think, that these scientific men are Spiritualists. When Sir A. Conan Doyle assures his many followers that this is so, they may be pardoned for believing. Very few of the writings of these Continental scholars have been translated into English, and often remarkable liberties are taken with the text when they *are* translated. We get therefore, the remarkable situation that spiritualist orators denounce materialism scathingly as the stubborn force opposed to them, yet most of these Continental scientists, whose support they claim, are materialists, or at least agnostics, as Sir Oliver Lodge has said.

But their endorsement of the phenomena was undeniably important. If the deeds of Eusapia Palladino and Marthe Beraud were genuine, the deeds of D. D. Home and Stainton Moses probably were. An able spiritualist writer actually urges this. Therefore men like Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir W. Barrett, who believed in Home but rather kept their belief to

themselves in the chilly atmosphere of the 'eighties and 'nineties, could now venture to speak out. Lombroso, Flammarion, and other Continental scholars expressly quoted and endorsed the experiences of Sir W. Crookes with Home and Florence Cook. English admirers could follow the lead. Russel Wallace came out with *My Life* in 1905. Sir Oliver Lodge, under whose name there is not a single spiritualist work in *Who's Who?* for the year 1904, began shortly afterwards to send an annual glow through the spiritualist world by some bold profession of belief. He published *Man and the Universe* in 1908, and *The Survival of Man* in 1909. Already in 1905 he had, not actually endorsed, but gravely commended to our notice, the materialisations of Marthe Beraud at the Villa Carmen in Algiers; and we saw that he had promptly returned to his belief in Eusapia Palladino. From that time until 1916 Sir Oliver Lodge was "the great scientist" of the movement, the link between popular belief and scientific theory.

The effect of the great war on the movement cannot be overestimated in its general influence, but the careful student will realise that it must be studied carefully. It is not merely no reproach to say that bereavement turned the minds of thousands to Spiritualism, but it is the most obvious fact of recent literature. Spiritualism precisely hoped and aimed to give the consolation of its message to these people. A very high proportion of its recent converts were thus converted. It may very well be doubted if Sir A. Conan Doyle would ever have been more than

a sympathetic outsider to it if he had not lost a son. The loss of a son by Sir O. Lodge proved of equal importance. But one meets everywhere men and women who were drawn into the movement on these grounds, and there is no need to argue about it. The war itself disturbed our mental balance. At one time, when there was little but vague hope to live on, I happened to learn certain facts which were the reverse of pleasant. I remember more than one woman of exceptional ability saying, "Don't tell me." They deliberately preferred an illusion. Then, in case after case, the one son disappeared. Our middle class had lived for twenty years as if no world-war could possibly happen. One son was enough. When he went, the mother's heart went with him.

The peculiar thing is that the slaughter was greatest in the first terrible three years of the war, yet it is difficult to discover that Spiritualism made marked progress in those days. It was hardly ever noticed in the press. Its representatives, apart from Sir Oliver Lodge, had not the least distinction. New books, which to-day are considered very weighty, left the public cold. In 1916, Mr. Crawford, of Belfast University, published an account of two years of physical experiences with a young Belfast medium, Kathleen Goligher.[1] Although Sir William Barrett warmly endorsed the table-lifting and other performances of this girl, the public took little notice.

[1] *The Reality of Psychic Phenomena* (1916), followed in 1919 by *Experiments in Psychical Science*. I have given a detailed criticism in my previous book.

In 1918 Mr. F. Bligh Bond published a work, *The Gate of Remembrance*, which recorded experiences that were strongly claimed by Spiritualists, but the book had a small circulation. Within a year of this date, however, the English press evidently concluded that Spiritualism was one of the chief topics in the public mind, and something like a touch of Pentecostal fire inflamed the movement. The war was almost over when this intenser vitality began.

The spiritualist world attributes this largely to the conversion of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and the historian will find it difficult to trace or assign other causes. There is, of course, the psychological explanation that all such changes tend to gather force underground before they erupt. The general prejudice against Spiritualism persisted until 1919. Until then the public rarely read anything about it in the press which was not depreciatory. Several English mediums were exposed. Bogus haunted houses were discussed for a week, and then dismissed with ridicule. The man or woman who, during the war, inquired and was converted, did not boast of it. Circles were quietly growing larger all over the country. They awaited only some message ringing out boldly in challenge, as that of Sir A. C. Doyle did, and they were then surprised to see how numerous they were.

Another important element was the rapid development of a very precise and (emotionally) attractive conception of life beyond the grave. The idea of a semi-material " Summerland " is, as we saw, as old

as Andrew Jackson Davis. But it fell rather into disrepute during the critical period of the 'eighties and 'nineties. Opponents were saying that this "Spiritualism" was decidedly materialistic, and a more modest tone was adopted in speaking to the public. At the beginning of this century the general public began to realise for the first time that there was something besides matter and spirit: something which the man of science called ether. Physicists disputed whether they should call it matter or no. Now some of the older Spiritualists had looked to ether for the compromise they wanted. They desired to outbid Christian theology by promising that the mother would see again the pretty form of her child, not merely get into unimaginable communication with some mind that called itself her child. It was less satisfactory than a telephone. The Spiritualist wanted to promise more, and at an early date he turned to this mysterious ether.

The discovery of radium at the beginning of the century led to further discoveries, which made ether quite an object of popular interest. Sir Oliver Lodge began to find "spiritual significance" in it. Others triumphantly leaped to the conclusion that they could at last reconcile science and religion, matter and spirit, by claiming that both were evolved out of a common ether. All spiritualist writers, as far as I remember, at least gave currency to the quite absurd idea that the new discoveries had given a death-blow to materialism, because they suggested that matter was evolved out of ether. It was

precisely what materialists had thought for twenty years. However, ether was obviously the material of the next world: ether-bodies, ether-houses, ether-flowers, etc.

This conception was slowly and crudely elaborated. It is extraordinary that a distinguished physicist like Sir Oliver Lodge could lend it the countenance he did in his *Raymond*. He included in the book supposed descriptions of the next world by his son. which spoke of fields and cattle and flowers, cats and dogs and houses, even clothes, whisky, and cigars. It is true that he gave in a footnote a sort of warning to the reader that he, Sir Oliver, did not necessarily believe these things because he published them. For the general spiritualist public it was enough that these things were communicated by mediums whom Sir O. Lodge guaranteed to be in touch with his dead son.

Raymond was the foundation of a new literature. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who is not a physicist, and is sublimely indifferent to the inherent difficulties, built up the golden city on an ether-basis with the facility of a master of fiction. We have ether-duplicates of our bodies, which pass to an ether-universe. Ether has, of course, no chemical elements, but Sir A. C. Doyle pictured it behaving just the same as matter. The citizens of "Summerland" would have the golden locks and blue eyes, the manly frame and voice, the lovely fresh maidenhood, that you had known on earth, and would recognise again. Scores of works of the same type poured

from the press. At last a powerful Sunday paper took it up, and the Rev. Vale Owen was suffered to weave all these fantastic speculations into a fabric that would have made Andrew Jackson Davis green with envy.

With one of our most popular and distinguished novelists as the herald of this "new revelation," as he called it, the movement was bound to grow. Sir A. C. Doyle began in 1919 to traverse Britain with marvellous energy and enthusiasm. St. Paul's missionary work was, in view of the conditions of his time, quite paltry in comparison. I found that seven hundred people in a Welsh village, or very small town, paid heavily to hear him; the local Spiritualists reaping the profit, of course. Six hundred paid more moderately, a few weeks later, to hear me criticise him. But he gave thirty lectures to my one. He shook the kingdom from Aberdeen to Plymouth.

This enthusiastic advance continued until the spring of 1920. The press began to tell things which were very unfavourable. Sir A. C. Doyle brought two Welsh mediums, the Thomas brothers, to London, and the result was thoroughly disappointing. A conjuror, Mr. Selbit, got up a counterfeit sitting, and at least proved that the most astounding trickery could be done under the eyes of an able professional detective and an able amateur detective like Mr. Stuart Cumberland. The literature of exposures began to be written over again. In fine, the general public tired of the subject, and, as always in such cases, returned to a mood of criticism. Challenges

were thrown out which could not be met. Mr. Joseph Rinn, a zealous member of the American Society for Psychical Research, advertised £1,000 for the production of a single phenomenon. Sir Oliver Lodge was trying to convey some of the English fire to America, and this was a very cold douche. American professors of the first rank, like Principal Stanley Hall, another Psychical Researcher, denounced Sir Oliver's mission in very plain American.

It would seem that the modern wave has begun to retreat from its highest point. Public interest is waning. Premature enthusiasm is cooling. There will probably be a great acceleration of this process before long, for a familiar reason—the exposure of mediums. Several mediums who have already been thoroughly exposed, and in some cases prosecuted, are again busy in the English movement. Other mediums, who are very popular, are doing things which can have only one significance in the eye of the historian and the expert. The wave of 1919–20 will give place to a deep hollow. And beyond? Bold would be the man who would venture to predict. It is enough to have recorded. Some strange stories of the founding of religions have been told. Is there one to compare with this chronicle of things which have happened in "the wonderful century of science?"

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